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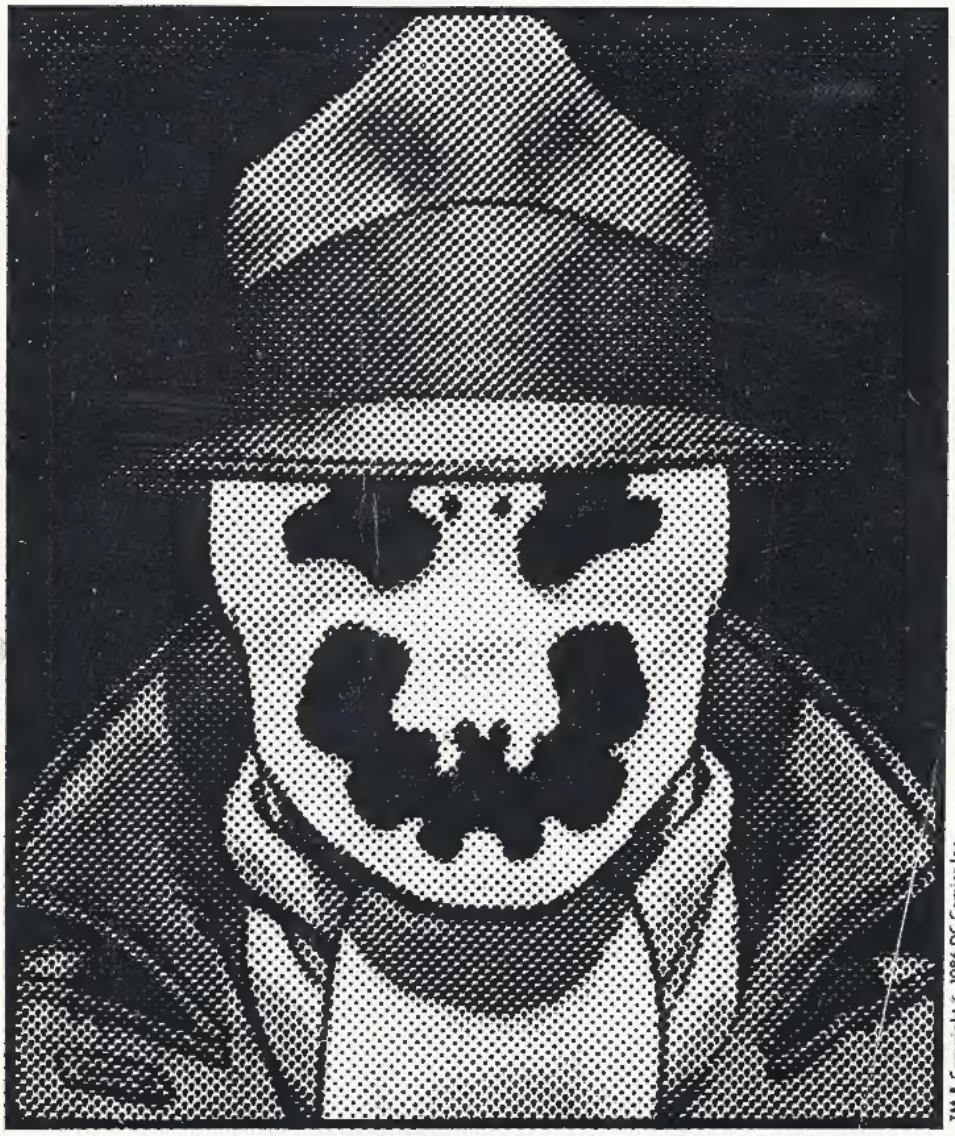

"You know what I wish? I wish all the scum of the Earth had one throat and I had my hands about it." RORSCHACH

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DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT
editor/publisher

conceived by:
JIM SALICRUP
editorial and design consultant

DARREL BOATZ
associate editor

PETER HOGAN
FIONA JEROME
CHRISTOPHER SHARRETT
MARTIN SKIDMORE
STEVE WHITAKER
contributing editors

M KAY McGONNELL
operations manager

JUDY O'NEIL
modem maven

D HAMBONE
art & tone director

TAMMY BROWN
BOB GARCIA
GILBERT HERNANDEZ
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ED O'NEAL
NEPTUNE
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MARTIN W HERZOG
canadian correspondent

WATCHDOG
she peeps at the watchmen

J R MATHER
international marketing director

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cover contributed by:
DAVE GIBBONS

UP FRONT

It's time for me to get up on my soap box and defend a poor, downtrodden, sometimes ignored minority. Who am I talking about?

Comic book **writers!**

First, let me assure you all (especially you artists who work with me) that this is **not** an anti-artists tirade. I, who have absolutely no artistic talent, thoroughly appreciate the wonderful people who draw my stories. No, this is merely a **pro-writers** tirade.

When was the last time you flipped through the PRICE GUIDE? Did you notice who the GUIDE always credits for one issue of a title having a higher value than another? The artist. Always, the artist.

For example, **Keith Giffen** pencilled Marvel's DEFENDERS #42-#54. Of those issues, #47-#51 are listed in the GUIDE as being worth more than the isues preceding or following them. If you accept that **Giffen's** artwork didn't change radically during the higher valued issues, then what could account for this?

The story!

It is the one thing that changes from issue to issue (or series of issues). Those issues contained a very good, extended story. A story that people are willing to pay just a little more for. (The fact that my esteemed publisher **David Anthony Kraft** wrote that story has nothing to do with my selecting it as an example.) Nowhere is any credit given to the writers in the GUIDE. How many books are listed as being worth more because of **Jack Kirby** art? God only knows. Have you ever seen one that was more because **Stan Lee** wrote it? I haven't.

Fans, however, are just as guilty of perpetuating this injustice. The X-MEN, easily the most successful book over the last ten years, has had only one constant across those years — **Chris Claremont**. THE NEW TEEN TITANS, DC's most successful series for the last five or six years, also has only one constant — **Marv Wolfman**. These books continue to do well even when the fan favorite artist has left. The reason? Because the **writers** tell stories the fans want to read!

I admit having a bias towards writers — after all, I am one! I admit that a good story is more important to me than good artwork. I can even understand that there are people who look at comics from the exact opposite position. What I cannot understand is this field's continued downplaying of the role a writer plays in creating a comic book!

With few exceptions, no one person can be credited for a book's success. And yet it happens all the time.

Most comics are the result of a **team** effort.

— Henry Vogel

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"We were writing about OUR world in the 80's."

ALAN MOORE

One of the best by one of the best.

Another introduction to Alan Moore and his work seems superfluous at this point. With coverage of WATCHMEN in THE NATION, ROLLING STONE, SPIN, VILLAGE VOICE, TIME and NEWSWEEK, Moore's centrality to the comic book renaissance is assured. While the current crop of artists and writers (Chaykin, Miller, et al.,) gives him some stiff competition, there is little question, especially given the extent to which he is imitated even at this early phase of his career, that Moore's erudition, his wonderful prose style, and the range of ideas he brings to his work make him important both to comics and to contemporary fiction overall.

The following interview touches on a range of ideas in Moore's masterwork, WATCHMEN, including the implications of hero worship and the political and moral concerns basic to Moore's conception of the superhero in all of his major work to date...

CHRISTOPHER SHARRETT: *Do you see any irony in the Juvenal quote ("Who Watches the Watchmen?") being used as an epigraph to the Tower Commission Report? WATCHMEN was obviously underway well before the Iran-Contra scandal broke.*

ALAN MOORE: It's the supreme and perfect irony, really. The fact that WATCHMEN was set in a parallel world aside, we were of course writing about our world in the 1980s. We found that in order to avoid treading on people's toes in terms of their personal beliefs or prejudices, it was easier to sidestep certain emotional reactions people might have by dealing with issues with the aid of comic-book conventions. Rather than, say, mention **Ronald Reagan**, who for some reason many people seem to like, we used **Richard Nixon**. Mentioning **Reagan** within the confines of this story would probably cause a lot of people simply to switch off and not get to the more important ideas we wanted to transmit. We were using a science fiction story as a framework for an examination of problems in our own world. Given this, there were numerous odd coincidences happening all the time as WATCHMEN was being written, but the Tower Commission Report was wonderfully apposite. We got a call from DC congratulating us on the P.R. coup of the decade! *(laughter.)* The only thing to surpass it was **Reagan** suggesting to **Gorbachev** that, who knows, they might team

Art © 1988 by Gilbert "BETO" Hernandez

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"Charles Manson had his fair share of charisma;

up to fight the aliens.

CHRIS: *I'd like to ask you some questions about the themes of WATCHMEN. It seems that the book is finally about Rorschach and Ozymandias in terms of their centrality to the narrative, and they are rather archetypal figures in their connections to certain types of protagonists in literature. Rorschach seems this wretched, acted-upon character who figures prominently in modern art from Woyzek to Psycho, while Ozymandias is a more classical hero, a symbol of empire and a person in absolute control of his destiny.*

ALAN: You could see them in those terms, particularly with the final confrontation, if you like, although it's not much of a confrontation. The *denouement*, with what happens to Rorschach and what happens to Veidt, might support that interpretation, I suppose. What we were trying to do with WATCHMEN was primarily to avoid a sort of baby-bird school of moralizing where the readers sit with their beaks open as they are force-fed certain pre-digested morals by the writer. We wanted to avoid the type of adventure fiction where the character who wins all the fights ends up with the white hat and is seen as the hero. Instead we invented six characters, each of whom has a radically different view of the world. Rorschach has a view which is very black but essentially moral. the Comedian has a view which is also black but essentially amoral. Dr. Manhattan has his own peculiar view of the world which could also be seen as valid. Indeed, according to some readings of WATCHMEN it might be possible to construe Adrian Veidt as the hero. What I wanted to do was to give each of the characters, including the ones I politically disagree with — perhaps *especially* the ones I politically disagree with — a depth that would make it feasible that these were real, plausible individuals. I especially wanted to avoid making Rorschach and the Comedian foils for my own moral opinions. I wanted these characters to have the kind of integrity to cause the reader actually to sit down and make some moral decisions. We wanted to present the reader with a variety of world views and some hard choices to make.

CHRIS: *It does seem, however, that the most important questions center on Veidt/Ozymandias, and that Veidt is a very particular rendering of the superhero as a symbol of power. Veidt seems to be fascism with a democratic face.*

ALAN: Certainly the book is about power, but it's about different manifestations of power. Veidt can still be seen as a liberal even though he's wiped out half of New York. Veidt is a character who has used the resources of his intellect and will to create a vast material empire which he can use to his own ends. Dr. Manhattan, on the other hand, is a more impersonal power; he's the H-bomb with legs, a power which hangs over each of us. If he were to wipe us out it wouldn't be anything personal, which is the general situation we face in the nuclear age. Rorschach is a character with a great deal of personal power; he's obviously impoverished and powerless in terms of normal society, but his integrity gives him power. It was an investigation of the different uses of power and the effects of power. I would say that although WATCHMEN was not *about* Ozymandias more than any other character, I think it's fair to say that since it's his actions that cause the entire book to happen, he is certainly a pivotal character. The moral implications of Veidt's actions are central to the book, and we wanted to sort of underline these implications through the use of the pirate narrative. The pirate narrative pretty accurately mirrors in a metaphorical sense Ozymandias's passage from a sort of young idealist to slayer of millions.

CHRIS: *Is it fair to say that WATCHMEN is about the foolishness of utopian dreams? As Rorschach remarks, utopias are usually built on a foundation of dead bodies.*

ALAN: I think we all entertain dreams of

Pencilled page for The Watchmen Role Playing game, and...

Bernie Goetz, granted charisma (by the media)."

a better world. I don't think I was suggesting that any dream of utopia is wrong. My main concern was to show a world without heroes, without villains, since to my mind these are the two most dangerous fallacies which beset us, both in the relatively unimportant field of fiction and in the more important field of politics. Human instinct seems to categorize the world continually in terms of heroes and villains. I suspect that if we had the power to look inside **Hitler's** head, into the heads of the greatest monsters in history, you would find heroes. The worst creatures no doubt saw themselves as heroes, so the whole category is rather pointless.

CHRIS: *I'm fascinated with the idea that Veidt is a Kennedy-style figure rather than a Nixon-style figure. His charisma is part of the equation that makes him dangerous. Frank Miller also touches a bit on the particular dangers of Kennedy-style charisma through the Ken Wind character in ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN.*

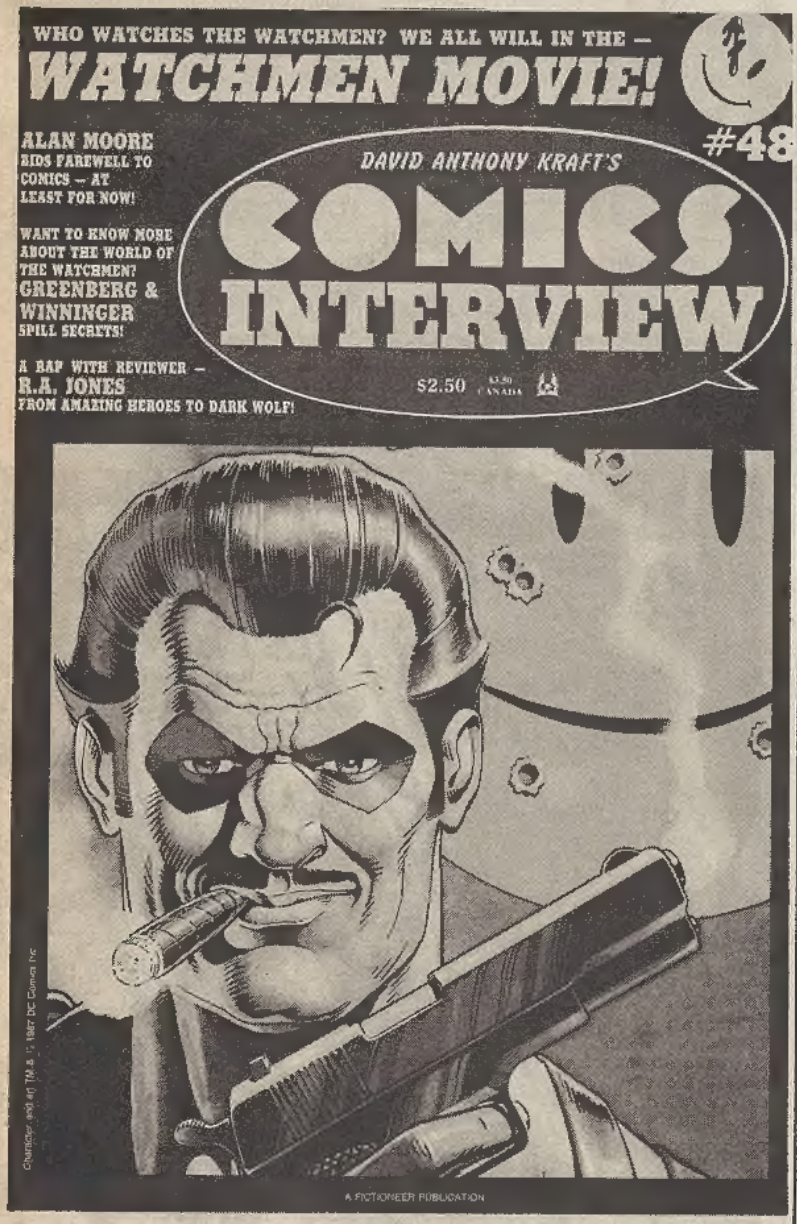
ALAN: Yes, it's interesting indeed. Charisma is a dangerous thing, because it's so unquantifiable. People don't seem to have charisma in direct relation to their goodness. **Charles Manson** had his fair share of charisma; **Bernie Goetz** was granted charisma on a different level by the media, and as usual it was well beyond that which he actually earned. The charisma of the hero is something that we tend to project upon people to take care of different sorts of needs. We give people the charisma of the hero or the charisma of the villain which ultimately elects them to kind of demi-godhood where we can no longer judge their actions. It's a dangerous notion. As I've said, I think we must get away from the idea of heroes and villains so that we can see our world made up simply of people, sometimes weak people, sometimes strong people, people working for misguided ends or whatever. I suppose the central question of WATCHMEN is the question Dr. Manhattan ask of himself on Mars, which is "who makes the world?" What I was trying to say in WATCHMEN is that we *all* make the world; it isn't the heroes and villains, the Dr. Manhattans and the **Richard Nixons** exclusively who make the world. It can just as easily be pudgy, acne-ridden, mentally subnormal kid working for a right-wing newspaper.

CHRIS: *Seymour is finally the ordinary common man?*

ALAN: He's the ordinary common slob, and also the most low-life, worthless, nerdish sort of character in the entire book who finally has the fate of the world resting in his pudging fingers. You may have noticed also that we spend a good deal of time with the people on the street. We wanted to spend as much time detailing these characters and making them believable as we did the main characters. We wanted all of these very ordinary human beings, who sometimes speak sensibly but most often don't, who sometimes know they're doing but most often don't, to have a place in this vast organic mechanism that we call the world.

CHRIS: *One criticism I've heard of WATCHMEN is that its politics become reversed. The book seems very radical, very progressive, but the bleak ending seems to suggest that the only change in the world is the kind of effectuated by charismatic leaders.*

ALAN: I could see how people could read that into it, but it certainly wasn't what we intended, and I don't think it's the most obvious sort of message the book conveys. In some ways what we were trying to say was quite the opposite. To my point of view, our leaders are in a sense riding a wave on a surfboard; they're not in con-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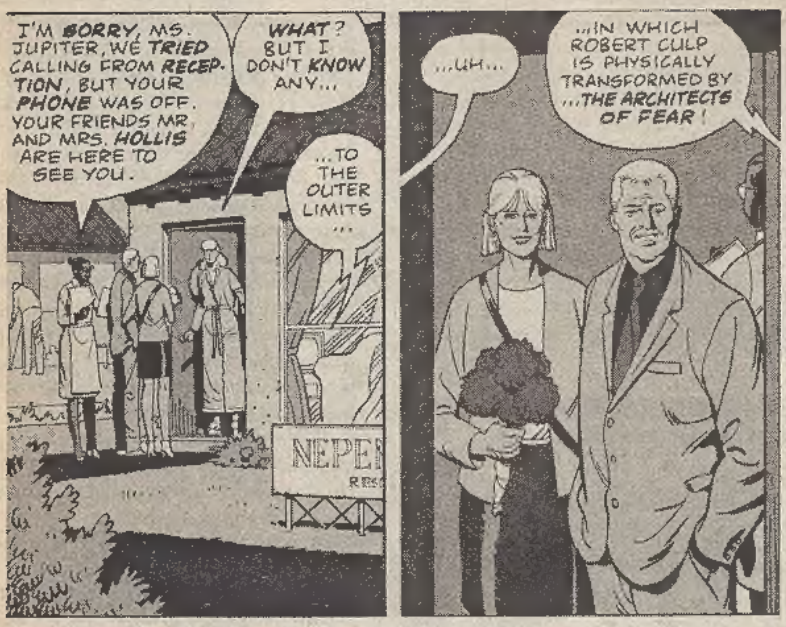
"My main inspiration for Rorschach's voice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Note the television broadcast in these panels...

trol of the wave, but because they're on top of it we sometimes get that illusion. The wave is in fact something vast and unfathomable which has its beginning in the mass unconscious or whatever and works its way out. Perhaps what Veidt did was totally unnecessary. The real point is that power resides with everyone, that we are all responsible. The world is far more complex than our political systems sometimes would have us believe, although of course these powerful individual leaders have a prominent role, but that too must be seen as the responsibility of everyone. The last line of WATCHMEN, "I leave it entirely in your hands," was directed at the reader more than at Seymour. The fate of the world is undecided; everyone has responsibility. What the reader does in the next ten minutes is as important as anything **Ronald Reagan** does.

CHRIS: *If I can go back to Veidt for a second, is it reasonable to assume that Veidt's plan fails? I ask this principally because you take the name Ozymandias from Shelley's poem, which is a meditation on the folly of power.*

ALAN: I wouldn't want to say what you can assume from that ending. It seemed to me that it would detract from the work if we were to allow the tension to be dissipated by a resolution. What I wanted to do was to crank up the tension and leave the reader with this tension. I wanted to leave the reader with this ending where even after this spectacular massacre, one doesn't know if the whole thing worked or if another Comedian-like twist of fate and circumstance would have it all amount to nothing and become the ultimate joke. I think some people were disappointed with the ending because they wanted something rock-solid and conclusive. We wanted the reader to make the decisions.

CHRIS: *I think the ending is fine as it stands, but you do invite an enormous amount of conjecture.*

ALAN: Yeah, I understand this and do it quite a bit meself. I think it's perfectly acceptable. Who knows, maybe Seymour didn't reach for Rorschach's diary but took another piece of crank mail instead. Perhaps the whole thing didn't work. Yes, I think there's a case to be made, particularly given the general tone of **Shelley's** poem, that this dream of utopia might end up as a cracked head in the middle of a wasteland.

CHRIS: *If I could touch for a moment on Rorschach, he's the most demented character but you've obviously given him a poet's soul. He's capable of waxing lyrical.*

ALAN: It's a kind of black lyricism, but, yeah, I would agree. Of course my main inspiration for that character's voice were the notes Son of Sam gave to the police.

CHRIS: *I was thinking also of the story of Carl Panzram.*

ALAN: Who? I don't believe I know the name.

...and the episode, starring Robert "I Spy" Culp.

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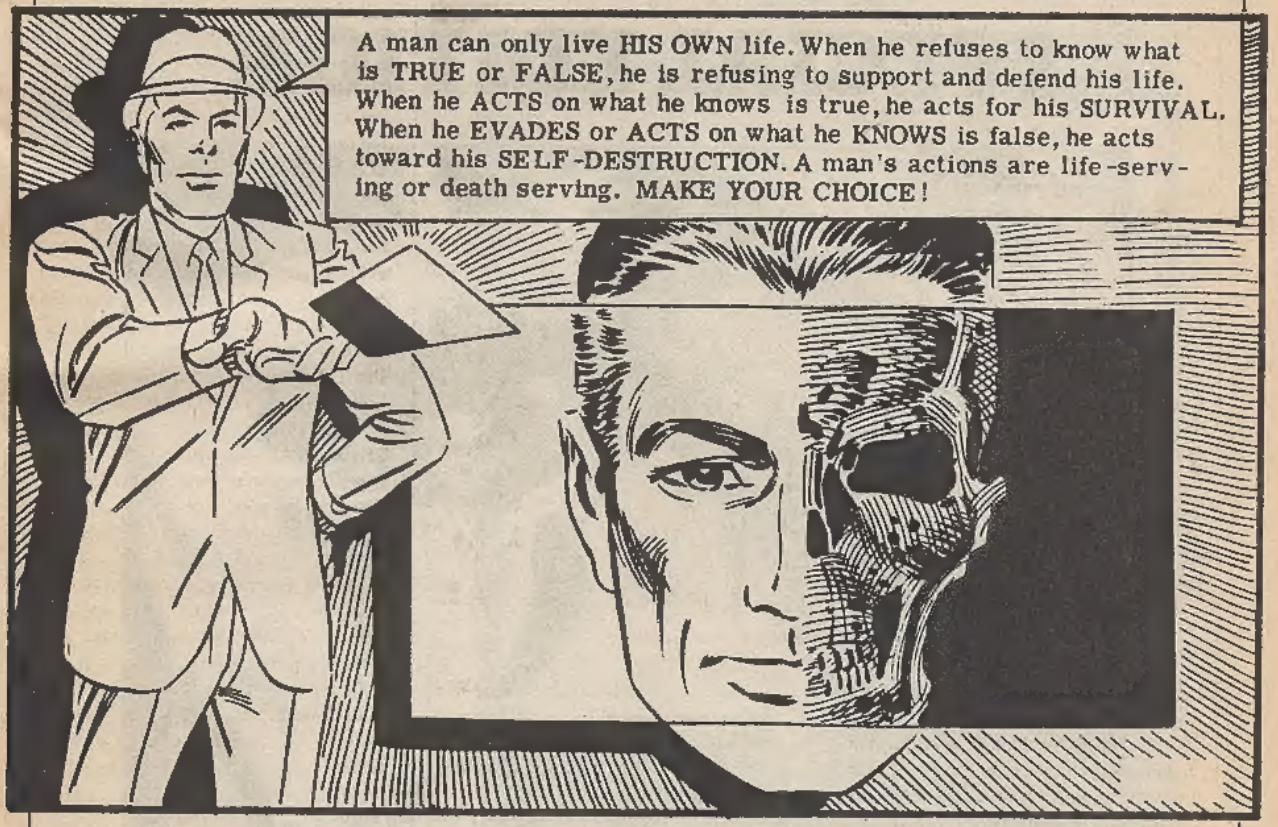
were the notes Son of Sam gave the police."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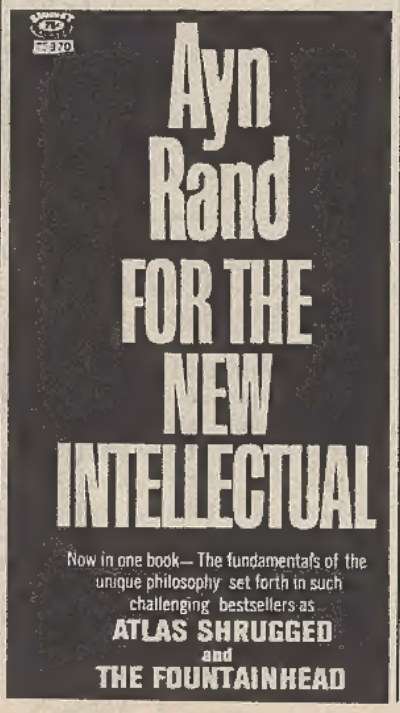
1973 Steve Ditko

CHRIS: *Carl Panzram was a rather famous mass murderer executed in the 1930s. He read Kant and Schopenhauer in prison, kept a journal, thought of the world as nothing but cruelty and horror. Rorschach's examination by Dr. Long sounds a bit similar to Panzrams's examination by Dr. Karl Menninger.*

ALAN: That's fascinating. It does sound like Rorschach, doesn't it? It's also the classic serial killer, who seems to have a rather high I.Q. and is usually extremely disaffected. But, no, the influences were **Steve Ditko's** Mr. A and Son of Sam. Mr. A was this marvelous **Ayn Randian** character who was utterly merciless with any form of evil and was unable to see any shades of grey in terms of morality. What we did with Rorschach was to take this even further. I used to ask "what does Mr. A think of when he masturbates?" The problem was that **Steve Ditko's** character was very much of a moral cipher. I put this character into a physically unpleasant body and combined it with the sort of mad, black poetry of the Son of Sam notes talking about the cracks in the sidewalk and the blood in the cracks and the ants that feed upon the blood. Rorschach was one of the characters I enjoyed writing most but the experience was a bit grueling. Issue #6 was a kind of paean to existential despair, and I had to settle meself into that frame of mind, which isn't the nicest place to be.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CHRIS: *The figure of Hooded Justice is interesting. He's a central figure in some ways, particularly because he's the first superhero, but we never learn much about him. We're especially in the dark concerning what motivates him.*

ALAN: He is a central figure in certain ways, but in writing WATCHMEN we wanted to approximate real life as closely as one can in a comic book. Just as there are a lot of subliminal little connections among events, there are also actions which have no real relevance to anything. I created a bit of a red herring here. Some readers latched onto the idea that Hooded Justice disappeared without leaving a definitely identifiable body and assumed that he might be the murderer and so forth. But the only story we give you is what's there. There's some material that you can assemble, based on the idea that when the events of the 50s overtook him, Hooded Justice decided to go on the run to protect his identity. The Comedian probably took advantage of the situation, and the bad blood which began with Hooded Justice beating up the Comedian in the trophy room ended with the Comedian putting a bullet in his brain and throwing his body in the river. It was just another miserable, grubby, violent sort of story in

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"She's a character who happens to be gay."

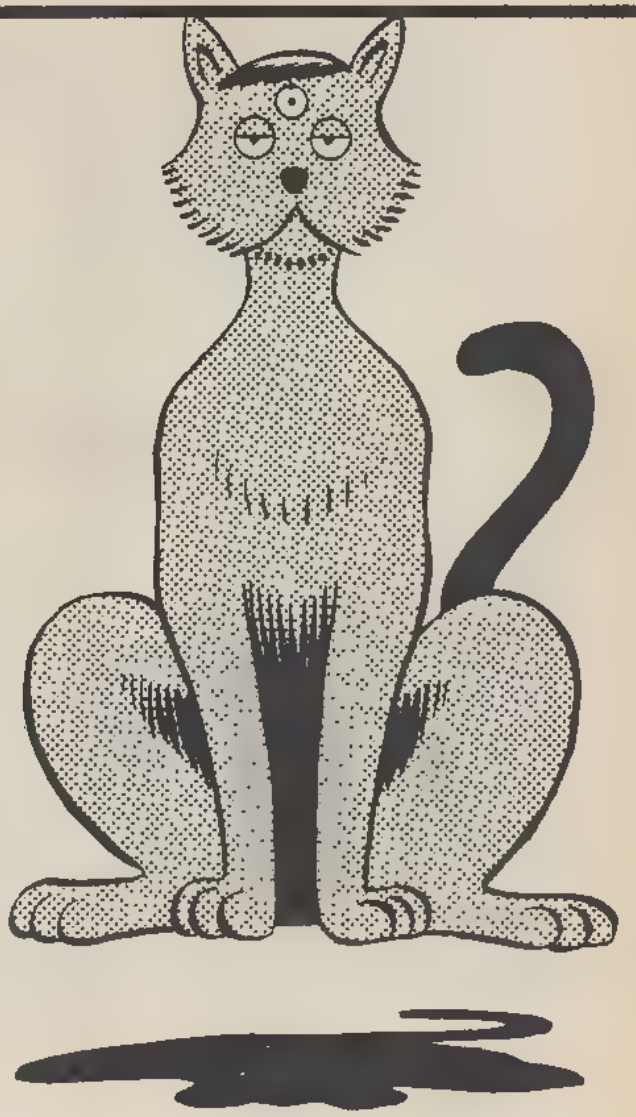
the lives of these superheroes. Some were killed, some went bad, some simply disappeared and were never seen again

CHRIS: *The gay motif involving Captain Metropolis and Hooded Justice is interesting. The gay angle was always implicit with superheroes, especially Batman, but never fully explored*

ALAN: There again I wanted to approximate real life as much as possible and that meant giving each of the characters a sexual identity, a political identity, and most components one would usually associate with personality. I tried to avoid making each of my characters someone who can be summed up in thirty-five words, which is basically the maxim which has been passed down in the comics industry for ten years. I think it was at Marvel that it was actually graven in stone that the *best* characters can be summed up in thirty five words I would hate to think that I could be summarized in thirty five words, and I wouldn't want to go to dinner with anyone who could be. It strikes me that ordinary people have a number of aspects to their personalities People have sexual dimensions, political dimensions, different emotional dimensions, and given the world of WATCHMEN it seemed likely that there would be roughly the same percentage of gay people as in our own world, and that certain professions might attract a higher percentage of gays than other professions It seemed sensible to me that costumed crimefighting might be one of those professions. But it isn't all that important finally, anymore than it's important that the cab driver is gay. She's a character who happens to be gay; she has a certain personality and her gayness is an aspect of that personality. But at the same time, yes, there is a sexual element to costumed adventuring and this becomes a subtext to the book The sexual element takes various forms It can be argued that Rorschach's energies must surely be displaced sexual energies, in writing him it was plainly obvious that he never had any relations with anyone at all, and furthermore viewed the entire subject with violent distaste, presumably because of his experience with his mother

CHRIS: *I'd like to ask just a couple of final questions on the characters. Ozymandias appears to be a bit undermotivated, considering that we know so much about Rorschach, Nite Owl, Dr. Manhattan and the others. We learn, for example, that Veidt's parents come to America in 1939, but have to assume the reason why*

ALAN: As you know, we gave one issue to each of the characters, with a different method applied to each character's background. With Rorschach there was a psychoanalytic approach, with Dr Manhattan it was kind of fourth-dimensional approach with reference to the theory of relativity. With Veidt, you'll notice that in his story, as he's recounting his life, he's facing away from us. This distances the whole thing; all we know is what he himself choose to tell us Yes, there are blanks, as you suggest. He doesn't choose to go into his feelings Perhaps this is a person who is extraordinarily bright, who measures himself against other people and decides what to do with his life. He decides he wants to tackle the big things, as it were, and to measure himself against people like **Alexander.** I recall the story of **Julius Caesar**



Art by Dave Gibbons (from Maxwell The Magic Cat, Vol. III).

Character © 1988 Alan Moore/Art © 1988 David Gibbons

"Burroughs is a strong influence, probably more

being found crying on his thirty-first birthday and asked: "Why are you crying, **Caesar?**" His reply was that by his age **Alexander** ruled most of the world. It struck me that this might apply to Veidt in that he couldn't bear the thought of anyone ever being better than him.

CHRIS: *It's nice the way that Veidt, as a modern Caesar, is able to saturate the world with his presence through his position as a corporate head. His name is on everything from jogging shoes to cologne. The corporate capitalist as Caesar.*

ALAN: Certainly. One of the things we wanted to do with WATCHMEN was to show the kind of congruity, the relationship of our world to the world of **Alexander**, or the world of piracy we feature in the Black Freighter narrative. The world of piracy, at least the fictional world of piracy, is this black place where a lot of horrid, murderous deeds go on. It would be a mistake to imagine that such a world, even an imagined one, is removed from events in the contemporary world. So we juxtaposed the pirate story with **Nixon** talking amount fallout drifts, and Ozymandias using **Alexander** as the first example of lateral thinking. I suppose the point here is that the more things change, the more they remain the same.

CHRIS: *To go back for a moment to characters' personalities, it seems that Rorschach's ego and self-estimation is as large as Veidt's despite Rorschach's terrible origins. The fact, this self-image allows him to do the most superhuman deeds, like climbing up a skyscraper or riding in the antartic with a trenchcoat on. Is the idea of ego a basic problem in the concept of the superhero?*

ALAN: In a certain sense perhaps. I've know various people who were capable of extraordinary physical acts simply because they were obsessed. I think we could have re-thought the bit about Rorschach climbing up the skyscraper, which is within the bounds of possibility I suppose but a little too superheroish. Our point here was to show the man's obsession. Wearing a warm coat in the antarctic would be a sign of softness to Rorschach, just as heating up a can of beans at Dreiberg's house would be a sign of softness. He sort of feels he would be betraying his principles to live in any manner other than one of total squalor and discomfort. This is probably a political thing as well. We've all known people who choose to live a very spartan lifestyle and attempt to justify it on vaguely political grounds, it's a way of validating oneself. Veidt is a bit opposite in his extravagant lifestyle, but there are similarities in regard to the way a person justifies a lifestyle and makes it correspond to a view of the world.

CHRIS: *I'd like to talk to you about influences. William Burroughs is referred to several times in WATCHMEN, such as in*

in his thinking, rather than the (his) writing."

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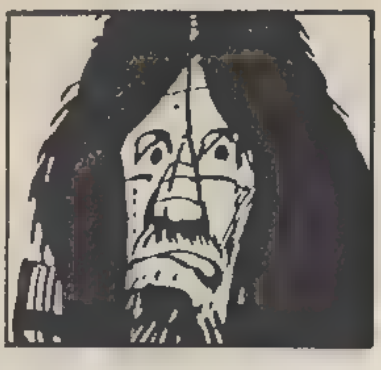
the first page of issue #11 and through the magazine title NOVA EXPRESS. Could you describe your interest in Burroughs?

ALAN: Sure. If I had to single out one major influence on my work it would probably be **Burroughs.** I would never attempt to duplicate his style of writing. I love his style but it's unique to him, there have been various attempts to mimic his cut-up technique, most of which has been mannered imitations of **Burroughs.** I do admire his style but I suppose the biggest influence is his thinking, his theoretical work, some of which has been wild and extreme, but the relationship he draws between the word and the image and the importance of both I think is significant **Burroughs** tends to see the word and the image as the basis for our inner and thus outer realities He suggests that the person who controls the word and the image controls reality. It seems to me a great pity that **Burroughs** hasn't done more comic strip work himself given his interest in juxtaposition. There is one **Burroughs** comic strip in existence It's a strip called "The Unspeakable Mr Hart," done for a British underground comic called CYCLOPS, which appeared around 1964. It was written by **Burroughs** and illustrated by a very talented artist named **Malcolm McNeal.** Oddly enough, that book is where my first piece of published artwork appeared. I did an advert for a comic shop that was published in CYCLOPS. It was a poorly drawn but a compelling little piece of work that was spotted by young **David Chester Gibbons,** who at that time was a surveyor and not involved in comics He was interested in the idea of a comic shop. He went to the shop, eventually got involved in Fandom, got involved in illustration and finally gave up his job as a surveyor. Just an odd **Burroughs**ian interconnection *(laughter).* But, yeah, **Burroughs** is a strong influence, probably more in his thinking, the thinking that goes into the writing, rather than the writing itself I loved the last book, THE PLACE OF DEAD ROADS, sort of Wild Bill **Burroughs** *(laughter).*



CHRIS: *I'm interested also in your knowledge of semiotic theory and the extent to which you've been influenced there Your style shows some relation to the work of Barthes and Derrida, and you actually mention semiotics in Chapter 11 of WATCHMEN*

ALAN: As an intellectual I'm incredibly lazy, and also something of a dilettante. I tend to pick an idea out of a book, hypothesize the rest, and fake it. The only book on semiotics I've *ever* read is **Roland Barthes'** MYTHOLOGIES, which I picked up about fifteen years ago. That was a revelation, this whole notion of the relationships of signals and signs A book I'm looking forward to is **Umberto Eco's** TRAVELS IN HYPERREALITY which I've got on order now. Yeah, I've got an interest in this but it's a sort of uninformed layman's interest. My interest is mainly in terms of how I can manipulate, if you will, the underlanguage of comics, the language which occurs at the juncture of the word and the image I'm interested in manipulating symbols and images in a way that will have a rather subliminal affect on the viewer I think comics as a medium is ideally suited for this sort of thing, far more so than film, because with comics you can stare at the page for as long as you need in order to absorb all the little hints and suggestions going on in the background With film you're dragged along with the running speed of the projector, and unless you have a director like **Alex Cox** who in REPO MAN is able to cram the background with so many details you can't help but register them — you can lose some details of a film

CHRIS: *In the area of visuals, I'd like to go to the first six pages of the last chapter of WATCHMEN, those images of the New York holocaust Those six pages are fairly unprecedented. I was thinking of images from Brueghel, Bosch and Goya.*

ALAN: We wanted to show the devastation of New York in as visual a way as possible. There have been quite a few holocausts in comics, but rarely is this kind of horror portrayed realistically. I mean, the first Superman comic begins with an entire planet being blown up. We're a little blase about the death of millions. Comics have been even more blase, I'm afraid, than other media in this regard We wanted to transmit the impact of this devastation by giving the reader an actual physical shock. You noticed no doubt that this was the first time in the entire series that we used a full-page picture. There are no splash pages in WATCHMEN; we

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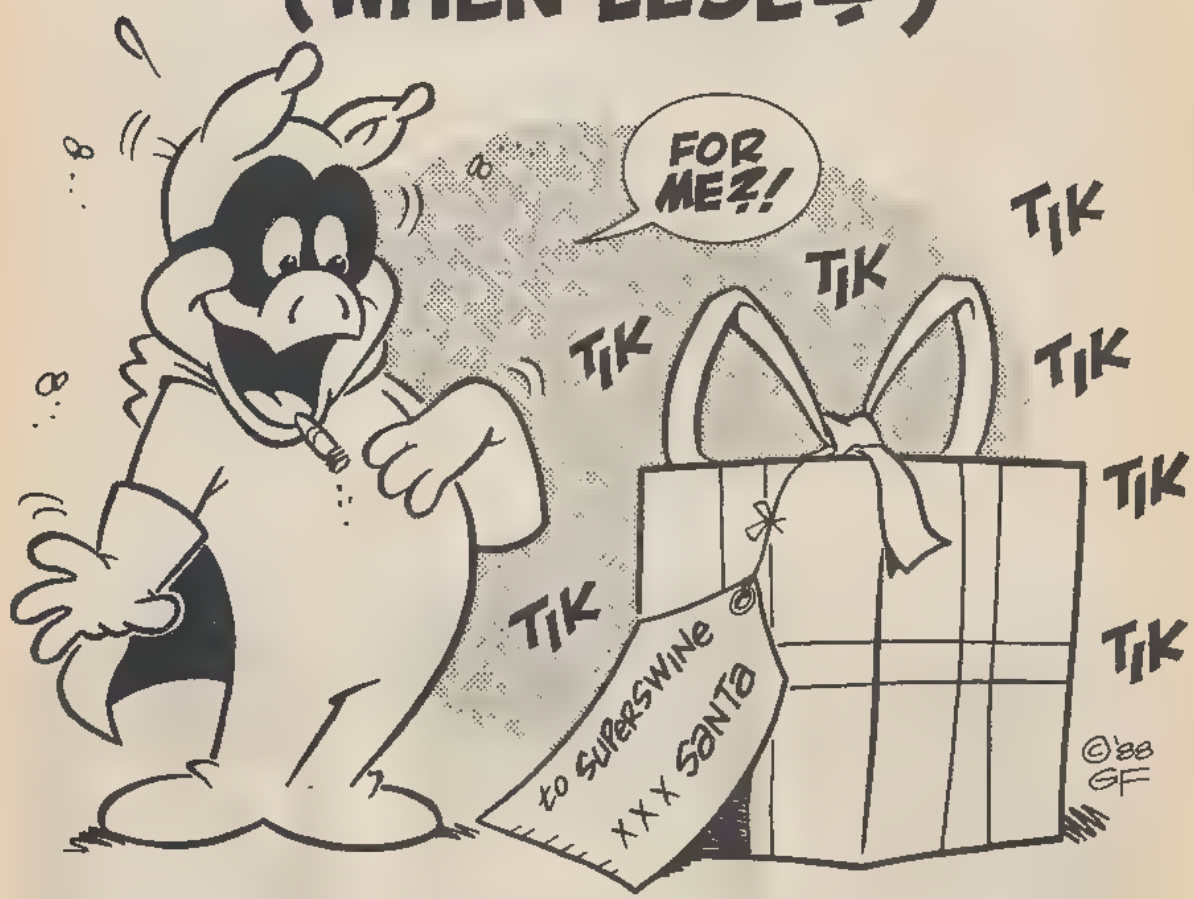

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"Maybe we did collapse the time factor a bit."

deliberately held off for eleven issues so that the impact of not one but six full-pages of images depicting in brutual detail this massive loss of life would be a bit devastating. I suppose that with all that intricate detail, all those little scenes of horror and such, it's rather difficult *not* to recall **Bosch** and **Brueghel**. I'm a big fan of those two gentlemen and I'm sure Dave is, too.

CHRIS: *There's a sense at the end of the book that nothing has really changed*

ALAN: Well, no, at least not in our intent. I think there's an impression that things had changed quite a lot. For one thing the streets are rather empty, there are fewer people about. But beyond that, every sign, every little detail has changed. The spark hydrants have changed; the Gunga Diner is now Burgers and Borsht, Tales of the Black Freighter has been edged out by Tales from the Morgue. Even the wall graffiti has changed: "Who Watches the Watchmen?" has been replaced with "Watch the Skies." "One in Eight Go Mad" is replaced with "One in Three Go Mad." The change is relative not only to Veidt's action but to the whole world of the book, since we began in a sense with a pre-1960s America and end with a post-1985 America. Whether or not this change is permanent is a different issue.

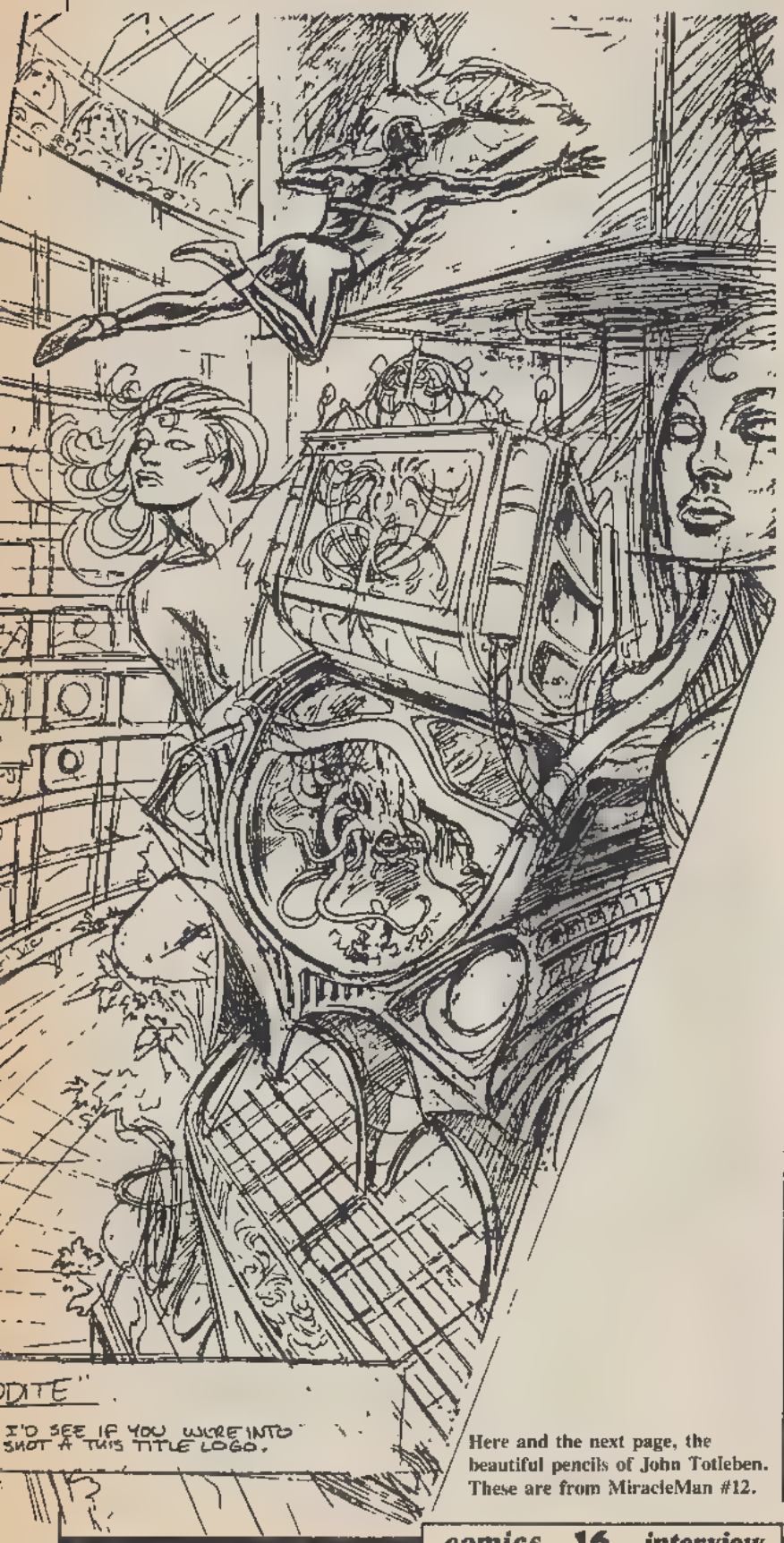
CHRIS: *There's an issue of realism there. The holocaust takes place in early November, but New York is entirely back in shape by New Years.*

ALAN: I'm not sure. We do have a world here with slightly different technologies than our own after all, and I think a mass devastation of New York would necessitate the immediate replacement of certain things. Say, for example, that you had planned to replace the spark hydrants anyway, and that the destruction of a large amount of them by cars smashing into them and so forth had expedited the process. Maybe we did collapse the time factor a bit there for dramatic effect, maybe it could have been February or March when the epilogue takes places it would have been a bit more credible, but I'm happy with the way it works.

CHRIS: *It strikes me that you're not interested in a kind of Hitchcock ending, since you really telegraph the conclusion to us fairly early on, for people really paying attention.*

ALAN: Our concern was that for people who read WATCHMEN, when they know who killed the Comedian, they could still find the book rewarding. On the simple MacGuffin level of the plot there is a murder mystery, but that certainly isn't the sold intention of the book. To us the most important thing is the semiotic substance, the things going on in the background, the meanings and intimations of meaning throughout the book. The plot was the skeleton over which we draped this flesh, the real substance of the book, and I think we got it about right in that most people I've spoken to who read it can go back two

"Miller and I are good friends. . .We might have



Here and the next page, the beautiful pencils of John Totleben. These are from MiracleMan #12.

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or three times and find new ideas or images they missed earlier on

CHRIS: *You really overturn the expectations of the audience with that ending in terms of the catastrophe that occurs. Most people were prepared, I think, for a real apocalypse*

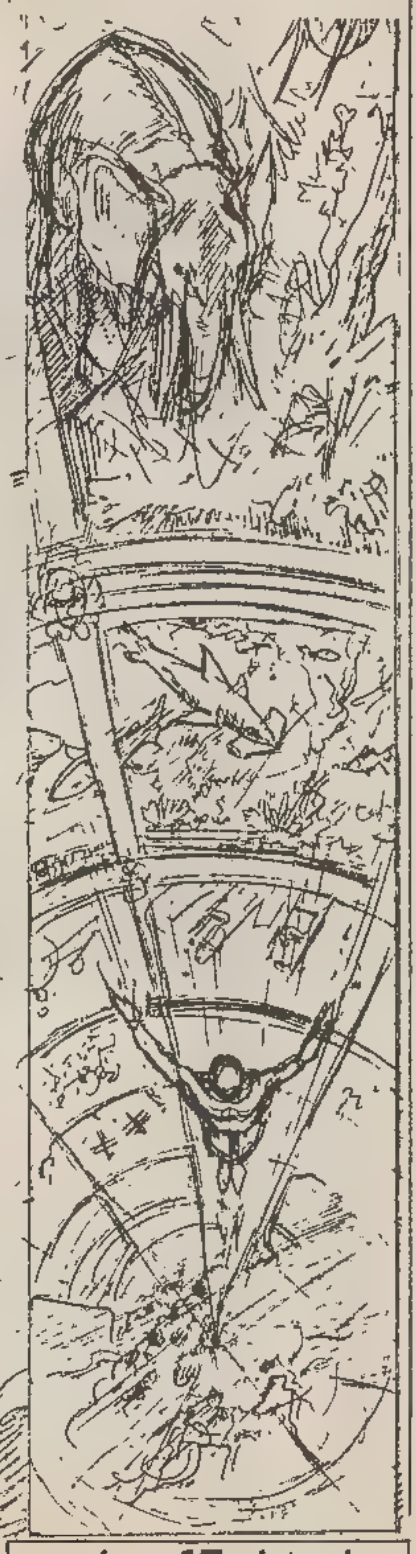
ALAN: Well yes, I think most readers fully expected the entire world to be wiped out and were disappointed when it was only five or six million people *(laughter)*. As I've said, we wanted to put the reader in the same moral dilemmas as some of the characters. I think we were successful in that, from all I've read; on the Compuserve network, according to the review in THE NATION people are still debating whether or not Veidt was right in his scenario, whether he had the right to do it or not. Yeah, I think expectations were overturned concerning the nuclear war. All the signs point to it, Dr. Manhattan has strongly hinted as much, but then you end up with something that might be considered even more horrible. To think that someone could carry out such an act ruthlessly, cold bloodedly, might be seen as more horrible than a catastrophe occurring due to our leaders' general mania and incompetence. We wanted to leave the reader with some moral questions about this act, questions which are problematical, I think, especially because the perpetrator is a liberal and a humanitarian! The issue raised here is not particulary new, of course. It's the same issue Rorschach brings up in his childhood essay, where he speaks highly of **President Truman** for dropping the bomb on Hiroshima, this old argument concerning the sacrifice of lives as a price one pays for the betterment of the world.

CHRIS: *Comparisons between DARK KNIGHT and WATCHMEN are inevitable, especially in regard to the treatment of the superhero in both.*

ALAN: **Frank Miller** and I are good friends, you know. We might have differences politically although we've never found anything to argue about. We're both what might be termed radical to one degree or other, and as a result of that, yes, I suppose there are similarities in the two books. There are areas that, while thinking separately, we did come to some similar conclusions about. I think what's more interesting than the similarities in certain concepts are the differences in basic concerns of both books. Frank likes adventure fiction, and what he wanted with DARK KNIGHT was to produce a very superior, very well executed piece of adventure fiction. That wasn't our ambition in WATCHMEN. We produced a

differences politically though we never argue."

moral and political fable that used the icons of superhero adventure fiction to make its point I don't know how to put this without sounding like I'm trivializing DARK KNIGHT, which is the last thing I want to do, but DARK KNIGHT includes moral and political ideas as part of its style, to make it more credible to the contemporary reader. It's basically adventure fiction with political ideas added to it. We came at it from the opposite direction. We were not concerned so much with adventure there wasn't much action, there was no clear-cut hero We were concerned with quieter things than DARK KNIGHT. DARK KNIGHT is a superhero adventure with moral and political ideas added in, WATCHMEN is a moral and political story with superheroes



CHRIS: *A predominant image of the book is the circle, since it appears in the central symbols of the clock, the smiley face the radiation symbol, and there is also a circular kind of structure to the book.*

ALAN: I think that the fact of those images being circles is more down to coincidence than any conscious attempt to refer to circularity. There is the clock, which simply helped underscore the tone of the book, a device that fit the title and concept in a kind of word-play relationship The smiley button reflected the tone of the series on a number of levels. We found out while working on the book that the smiley face originated in a series of behavioral experiments with children They were experiments to find the purest image of affection that a baby would respond to, and the smiley face is apparently it. The smiley face is evidently the purest symbol of innocence the human race has been able to come up with thus far. In that sense, putting a bloodstain across the eye of the face allows for a number of interpretations. There's the idea of smiling through the blood, the idea of a bloody joke, which after all is what Ozymandias perpetrates on humanity Also, since the badge is a symbol of innocence, and since superheroes have also represented a certain naivete and innocence, you have a sense of lost or bloodied innocence, the end of this idea of truth, justice, and the American way The very naive notion of superhero goodness gets bloodied and knocked about. There were a few other resonations there, but I think those were the principal ideas

CHRIS: *I wonder if you would discuss for a bit the relationship of WATCHMEN to MIRACLEMAN in terms of the image of the superhero.*

ALAN: When I returned to MIRACLEMAN after working on WATCHMEN it seemed that some of the ideas I began with on MIRACLEMAN had become old hat, since I'd developed them more fully in WATCHMEN and in the intervening periods other creators had also come up with some very radical takes on the superhero. It was difficult to rethink this because I had already planned the plot outline of MIRACLEMAN and knew where it was going to go, but in Book

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"I haven't signed any new contracts with anyone."

Three I had to push the superhero even further than in WATCHMEN MIRACLEMAN could not be as complex or intricate as WATCHMEN, of course, but it had to have a vision of the superhero that was even more radical So I looked to the inspiration for superheroes in the motherlode, in the Greek myths, where you have an Olympus, you have a number of gods, each of whom govern an area of human endeavor It's much more of a fantasy than WATCHMEN, but again a sort of very ambiguous utopia. MIRACLEMAN seems very benign, very decent, but some questions remain. I think I take it a step beyond WATCHMEN.

CHRIS: *I'd like to wrap up by asking you some questions about your future plans We know that you've parted company with DC, but there continue to be rumors that you're through with comics entirely.*

ALAN: No, that's not true I'll not be doing anymore work for DC, but I'm not leaving comics. It's true I won't be doing much work in mainstream comics, and most people can't imagine comics outside the mainstream, so I suppose that's where the rumor came from. It's true about DC, however. V FOR VENDETTA will be coming out soon; the Batman/Joker graphic novel with **Brian Bolland** is finished; and I'll very likely do a Mr. Monster/Swamp Thing team-up which I planned quite some time ago with **Michael Gilbert.** After that, in terms of future plans, I'm impressed with the development of the comics audience in the recent couple of years, the fact that we find comics in the book shops and we've gained a fingerhold with the adult audience If you would have asked me five years ago to describe my audience, I would have stated by placing it between 13 and 18 years of age Now I'd place it between 13 and 35 or 40. It has expanded a great deal If we're going to keep that audience we're going to have to be conscious of their interests, which aren't going to be the same as our captive audience It's true that this new audience will occasionally enjoy a novel take on the superhero, but it won't want a steady diet of that. It would be like all the films being westerns, and unfortunately comics have had that kind of homogeneity. So I'm finished with superheroes; after V FOR VENDETTA and MIRACLEMAN that will be it for the foreseeable future in terms of superheroes But I'm certainly not through with comics I might do the odd film script or novel or television play, but that's just because of my interest in experimenting with those media. Basically, I've no interest in films, no interest in television work For me comics is still the most exciting medium to work in, with the greatest possibilities

CHRIS: *What about the independent comic companies? Do you have any contracts there?*

ALAN: I haven't signed any new contracts with anyone. The independent companies have many of the same problems, in that the arrangements they make with their creators are usually shameful and antediluvian If DC and Marvel comics now have pretensions regarding this adult market, they should adopt adult business practices. Instead, they continue to treat their creators as chattel The idea of creators owning their own creations is something that DC Comics even in its new, enlightened mode refuses to entertain. They've set up a new concern called Piranha Press, which they optimistically hope will attract work of the quality of LOVE AND ROCKETS and MAUS, yet DC will continue to own rights to all characters, thank you very much. They simply must be taught a lesson. For my part, I might as well work with book companies and be treated as a proper author, so my ambition really is to write graphic novels for book companies, which will be going out to the book shops, with me owning the rights to my own creations, the company having the right to print the material once This is a bit more reasonable and civilized. So that's my strategy: comics for book companies rather than comics for comic book companies. I also think it a good idea to sort of stake out that area and consolidate it, to keep a steady stream of graphic novels which will continue to interest the widest

From the Aug. 15, 1985 cover of Amazing Heroes. Art by Gilbert, Loebs, Bissette, Totleben and D. HamBone (tones).

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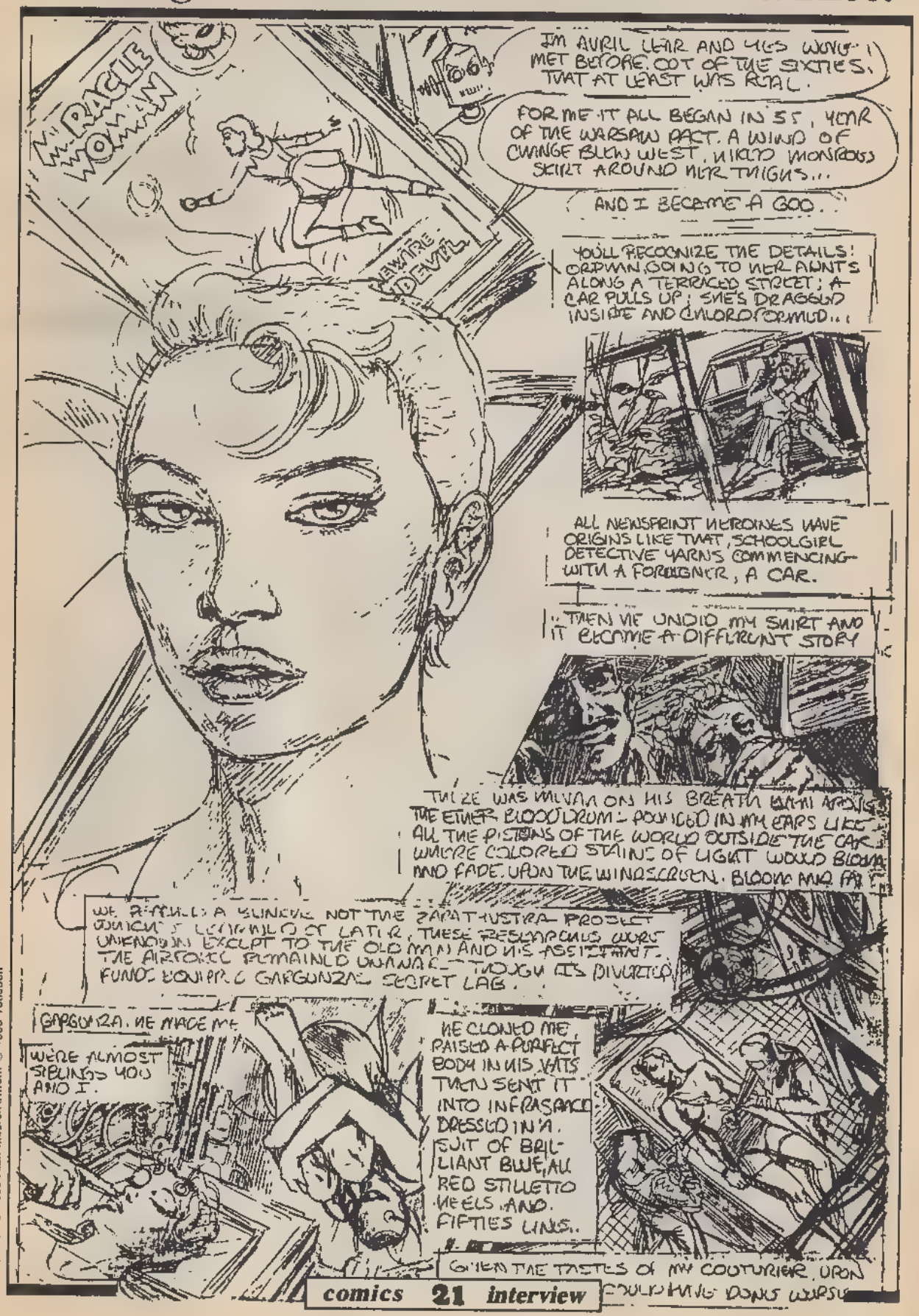
"Politics for most people has to be on the

I'M AVRIL LEAR, AND YES, WE'VE MET BEFORE OUT OF THE SIXTIES THAT AT LEAST WAS REAL..
FOR ME IT ALL BEGAN IN '55, YEAR OF THE WARSAW PACT. A WIND OF CHANGE BLEW WEST HIKED MONROE'S SKIRT AROUND HER THIGHS..
...AND I BECAME A GOD
"YOU'LL RECOGNIZE THE DETAILS: ORPHAN, GOING TO HER AUNT'S ALONG A TERRACED STREET; A CAR PULLS UP; SHE'S DRAGGED INSIDE AND CHLOROFORMED..
THE TASTES OF MY COUTURIER UPON REFLECTION I COULD HAVE DONE WORSE.
Character © 1988 Alan M

From MiracleMan #12. Pencils & inks by John Totleben... and the original pencil page.

level of gutter rubish as Hart & Donna Rice."


RACLE WOMAN
WIRE DEVIL
I'M AVRIL LEAR AND YES WE'VE MET BEFORE. OUT OF THE SIXTIES, THAT AT LEAST WAS REAL.
FOR ME IT ALL BEGAN IN 55, YEAR OF THE WARSAW PACT. A WIND OF CHANGE BLEW WEST, HIKED MONSTROUS SKIRT AROUND HER THIGHS...
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ALL NEWSPRINT HEROINES HAVE ORIGINS LIKE THAT, SCHOOLGIRL DETECTIVE YARNS COMMENCING WITH A FOREIGNER, A CAR.
...THEN WE UNDID MY SHIRT AND IT BECAME A DIFFERENT STORY
THERE WAS MENTHOL ON HIS BREATH WHEN HE KISSED ME. THE ETHER BLOOD DRUM: POUNDED IN MY EARS LIKE ALL THE PISTONS OF THE WORLD OUTSIDE THE CAR. WHERE COLORED STAINS OF LIGHT WOULD BLOOM AND FADE UPON THE WINDSCREEN. BLOOM AND FA
WE REFINED A SUNDRY NOTE THE ZARATHUSTRA PROJECT COULD'VE LEARNED OF LATER, THESE RESEMPLINGS WERE UNKNOWN EXCEPT TO THE OLD MAN AND HIS ASSISTANT. THE AIRFORCE REMAINED UNAWARE THOUGH ITS DIVERTED FUNDS BOUGHT A GARGUNZA SECRET LAB.
GARGUNZA. HE MADE ME
WE'RE ALMOST SIBLINGS YOU AND I.
HE CLONED ME, RAISED A PERFECT BODY IN HIS VATS THEN SENT IT INTO INFRASPACE DRESSED IN A SUIT OF BRILLIANT BLUE, ALL RED STILETTO HEELS AND FIFTIES LINES..
GIVEN THE TASTES OF MY COUTURIER, UPON
COULD HAVE DONE WORSE

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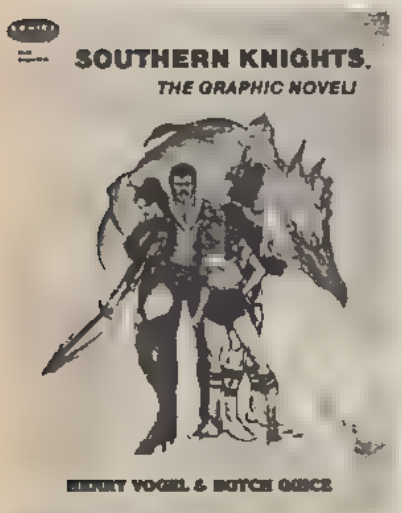

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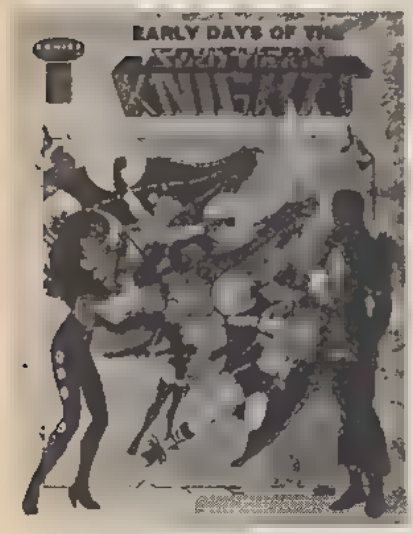

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"I'm quite optimistic about comics."

possible adult audience and really give comics their proper place. Now, in terms of content, like I say, no superheroes. I'm much more interested in exploring our own world rather than creating new alien worlds and such. There are so many areas of our own landscape that seem like the first outpost of Mars there is no need to create fantastic worlds. It strikes me as much more interesting to find the weird, bizarre, and fascinating aspects of mundane, everyday life.

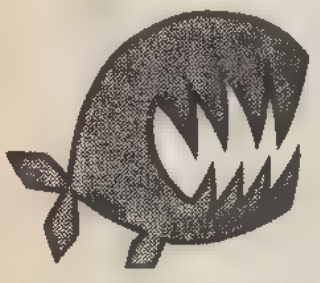
CHRIS: *That's very much the strategy of someone like Burroughs, and also J. G. Ballard.*

ALAN: Absolutely. With **Ballard** it's easy to see how he's gotten away from fantasy in one respect while finding things in the inner, psychic landscape that are as every bit as fabulous and fascinating as his drowned worlds and crystal worlds. That's the kind of direction I'll be taking. I'm planning to do a graphic novel which I can't say too much about at the moment, but it might very well involve a shopping mall, an image which fascinates me and has been dealt with a bit in some books and films but not by any means exhausted. I'm also interested in using comics for other purposes, such as political journalism. I don't know if you've seen REAL WAR STORIES, but that's an example of one kind of work that I enjoy doing and has to my mind a lot of applications. I don't know what it's really like in your country, but if it's anything like over here people would rather die than read a page of political analysis. Politics for most people has to be on the level of such meaningless gutter rubbish as **Gary Hart-Donna Rice** before people become interested. That's the kind of expectations and tastes people have cultivated. Politics has become some sort of quantum science which most people would like to leave to the big boys and the experts and not bother with otherwise, which I find a profoundly dangerous notion. Now, since comics are sort of inherently garish and sensational, it might be possible to get across complex political and moral ideas in a way that would be attractive to most people and cause people actually to sit down and read. Perhaps it's a small way of getting people to see how the study of politics actually applies to everyday life. I think this strategy has been validated somewhat by the Pentagon, which released a study saying that the most effective way of getting ideas across is in the form of a comic strip. We've believed it all the time but now it's official *(laughter)*. So our side has to have some role in this. I think much can be done here, and without vulgarizing our oversimplifying complex moral and political ideas so that they come out looking like some melodramatic made-for-TV movie or something. We'd want to avoid that, but I think comics could be a way of giving things back to the public, not just in the area of politics but in, for example, the area of literature. No one reads poetry, as a case in point. It's probably the easiest thing to get published and the last thing people want to read, perhaps because in school they've had hosts of golden daffodils crammed down their throats and came away thinking that's what poetry is all about. In SWAMP THING you may not have good poetry, but there is poetry there which people can read and enjoy and perhaps see how poetry can be connected to a larger world of ideas. It might be possible actually to give back politics and poetry to people through this medium.

CHRIS: *For some time there's been a discussion about comics being the last outpost of literacy. With people like yourself, Frank Miller, Howard Chaykin, and others, that might finally be true. It's a shame that the major companies still have such poor policies.*

ALAN: That's all got to change. I can see a domino effect happening. Basically, I see companies like DC and most of the others so far rooted in the past that they will continue to hang onto their rather dismal, grubby business practices for as long as possible, but in fact that won't be for much longer. When they see that people like me and Howard and Frank and the other top creators in the field can take work to book companies they will see where their competition is. There will be no reason in the world why even *new* creators could not take their work to book companies, which I think will want to involve themselves in this new market more and more. I think the literacy idea is quite correct and we'll be seeing a great deal of excellent work produced in the medium. There has to be a domino effect as comics companies realize what kind of competition they're faced with. In Britain the situation is even worse in terms of company policy toward creators, worse than any of the American companies, but they will have to realize that with American companies coming over here regularly to hunt for talent it's now an international market. The British comics companies will have to compete with the American comics companies who in turn will compete with the book companies. If it all works out — and of course there are many slips between cup and lip — but if it does work out, inevitably comics will be brought up to a perfectly respectable status with all other media, the kind of status other media have enjoyed for the past several decades. I'm quite optimistic about it and am looking forward to a very, very vital comics medium within the next ten years.

Detail of Gene "The Dean" Colan's ultimate version of Swampy.



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COMICS ON THE BITING EDGE

This says it all.

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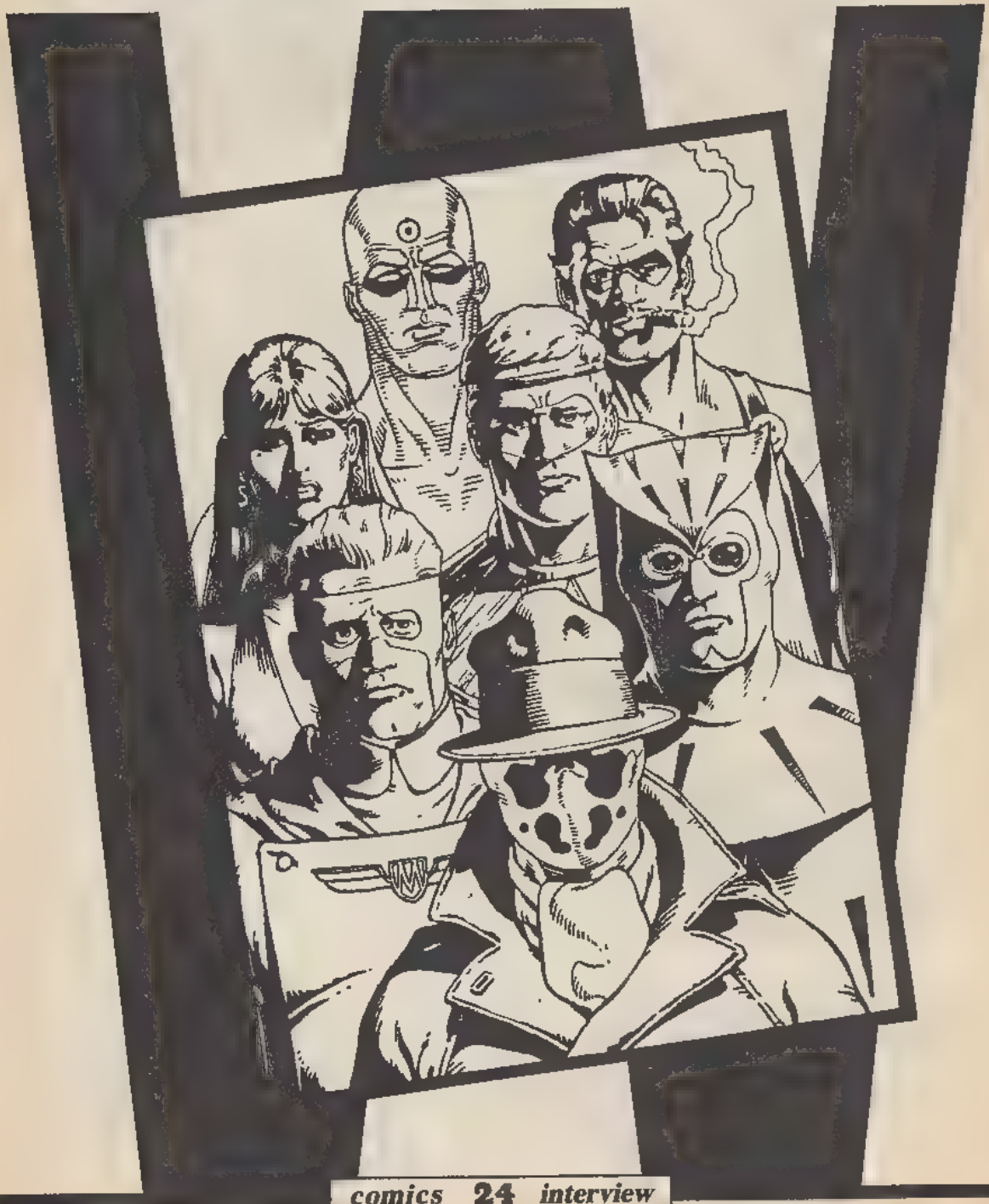
"It's difficult pinning down what's symmetrical to

WATCHMEN ROUND TABLE: MOORE & GIBBONS



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what - I mean to me, at least to some extent... "

Photo: Forbidden Planet

Gibbons, the happy face and Moore.

The following Round table discussion with Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons was to elucidate upon various observations and insights into WATCHMEN, as well as to get rid of a few fallacies and false conclusions. The discussion was conducted by Martin Skidmore with the participation of fellow Britons Fiona Jerome, Steve Whitaker and Peter Hogan, and first saw print in the pages of FANTASY ADVERTISER, a fine English comics-oriented publication. Thanks to all of the above for making the most fascinating follow-up on WATCHMEN available to a wider readership.

MARTIN SKIDMORE: *All right, let's have a starting point...just what is it about WATCHMEN that distinguishes it from other...*

STEVE WHITAKER: *Cream cheeses?*

MARTIN: *...super-hero comics on the market?*

DAVE GIBBONS: Is this in the form of direct questions to us, or . .

FIONA JEROME: *No, we're all gonna talk.*

DAVE: Well, I'll have a schnoozle then. .

STEVE: *The thing that I think distinguishes WATCHMEN from other comics is that the series holds together more like a novel. Your climax isn't in the last 3 panels in WATCHMEN #12. There are long quiet tracts with exciting bits or...moderately exciting bits* (Laughter.) *In term of Jack Kirby/Wham! Smash! Pow! it's all very quiet. There's a lot of suffering but...*

MARTIN: *...it's all emotional rather than physical suffering.*

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"Episode 6 was about the most depressing of the series."

Alan Moore at his best, here, with John Totleben & Steve Bissette...

ALAN MOORE: It's a difficult question for me and Dave to answer, probably one that you could answer better, but if I had to say anything then it's the degree of structure that me and Dave have applied to it — I can't think of many examples of that degree of structure, that degree of layering

FIONA: *I was going to say: especially visually you don't get such a use of motif — certainly not in American comics*

MARTIN: *Doug Moench has used it occasionally.*

FIONA: *But not with the same complexity and not filling-in with written structure as well.*

PETER HOGAN: *The thing is: you're given a world. The characters, all right, they're based on the Charlton characters but they're new as of page 1. Even so, they're characters with a history that comes out over the course of the thing... their world has a history... it has a cohesion to it*

STEVE: *Something that quite interests me now we're talking about structure and stuff, is the symmetry - there is a real symmetry to WATCHMEN and the way the characters are set up.*

DAVE: Two arms two legs *(Laughter)*

MARTIN: *Perhaps the Comedian and Rorschach ..*

STEVE: *I was thinking more of Osterman and Ozymandias.*

MARTIN: *That's right — the intellectual and physical, chaos and law...*

ALAN: It's difficult pinning down what's symmetrical to what — I mean to me, at least to some extent, there's an equally good case for contrasting Nite Owl and Rorschach

FIONA: *Yeah?*

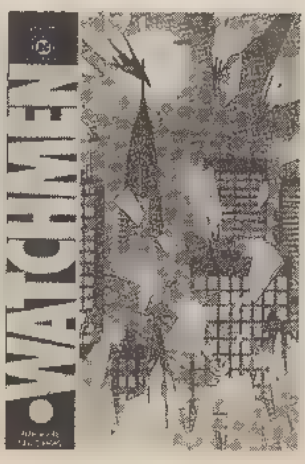
ALAN: Episode 6 was about the most depressing of the whole series; Episode 7 was probably the most uplifting. So there is a symmetry in the series but..

MARTIN: *I was looking at it in a moral sense — I mentioned Dr. Manhattan and Ozymandias specifically as reflecting the law and chaos... Oz wanted to establish a benevolent dictatorship, albeit a behind-the-scenes one — whereas Dr M goes on about randomness creating beauty, creating life and so forth. There's a contrast there, and it's the same sort of contrast that I mentioned as being between the Comedian and Rorschach, it's a moral one - someone who'll do anything for the government as opposed to someone who has strong morals, even if they are mad ones.*

ALAN: I think it's difficult finding what is symmetrical with what because if you take it from a moral attitude you could probably strike certain parallels but from another angle you'll get a completely different set of answers

FIONA: *You can make groupings. You can make endless groupings...*

DAVE: It's almost like reading your horoscopes in the paper — even when they get the predictions in the wrong order, you can still find something that applies to you. Because we've had 12 issues to do it, we've been able to explore so many different facets of the characters and their motivation that I'm sure you could find



... and here, with Dave Gibbons.

"The thing that Rorschach won't stomach is that N.Y.

patterns — even where none were specifically intended

STEVE: *But the patterns are one of the things that fascinate me about... sorry, Peter*

PETER: *I was just going to say that I thought one of the biggest clashes — right at the end — was between Ozymandias and Rorschach. The thing about Ozymandias is the fanatical gleam in the eye, his plan for humanity...*

STEVE: *What, where he says that he has just saved humankind, they are the good guys ...and Rorschach doesn't agree with him*

PETER: *But Rorschach is the man of honor and repeats — virtually repeats — that line from issue #1: "No compromise."*

FIONA: *Looking back at Ozymandias making this decision "I will kill so many million people to save the world" one thing that struck me is that when Dr Manhattan teleports the people away from the riot and kills two of them he says that's OK because many more people* would *have died, and Rorschach, in his essay*

ALAN: About **Truman.**

FIONA: *Yes — about Hiroshima — says "I'm glad they dropped bombs on Hiroshima because lots more people would have been killed."*

ALAN: Yes, more people would have died

FIONA: *So although they're diametrically opposed in one way, they've all made this same statement, they've all made this same decision... but only Ozymandias has followed it through*

ALAN: The thing with Rorschach was intentional He mentions **President Truman** on the first page of WATCHMEN and there is that brief essay which ends up saying "I think **President Truman** was right to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and that's all I have to say about my parents " And so, you know...that was a pretty common thought, that **Truman** was right to drop the bomb for that reason Rorschach is — at least at that point in his life, where he still believes in God .

STEVE: *He's living very emotionally.*

FIONA: *And he still believes in Daddy being an aide to President Truman and...a fantasy life*

ALAN: But at the end of the book, Ozymandias — who does this awful thing to New York. which is really, by extension, no more horrible than

Hiroshima — you've got that parallel there

FIONA: *It's only the degree that differs, it's not the act — because they've already done it.*

STEVE: *But in WATCHMEN #2 you learn...you really learn to hate the Comedian. I mean — shooting a pregnant woman, such a callous murder and in #11, which corresponds symmetrically, you learn to hate Ozymandias completely Things like him sitting on his parents grave*

DAVE: Callous

STEVE: *A perfect depiction of how completely aloof he is, because he really does believe that he's above it.*

DAVE: Yes, but was dropping an A bomb on Hiroshima a callous thing or was it a calculating thing — is there a difference?

FIONA: *They're both callous and calculating.*

STEVE: *Surely the difference is that Hiroshima really happened and you're making a metaphorical statement about it*

DAVE: Yeah, and the thing that Rorschach won't stomach is that this is being done secretly, that a large section of New York is being wiped out — even in the face of Armageddon he wants to know the truth

PETER: *The thing with Rorschach's involvement with the New Frontiersman is he's into conspiracy theories anyway but the diary is his way of getting the truth across*

STEVE: *I'd like to know why Osterman lies...well, the doesn't exactly lie, he withholds the truth about Rorschach from Veidt.*

ALAN: He doesn't mention it

STEVE: *Veidt says something like "What about Rorschach?" and Osterman says "I doubt if he'll reach civilization." He doesn't say "Don't worry, I've just blasted him to atoms"... it comes across as a mercy killing.*

ALAN: It's almost a mercy killing. When I was writing that bit where Veidt and Osterman sort of confront each other at the end and have the conversation, Dr Manhattan put it that way because, I would imagine that he realized that put otherwise it could possibly make things worse for Dan and Laurie: they've already got the death of an entire city to carry round with them in their heads and never tell anyone about for the rest of their lives. It was a small act of mercy so they could believe

is being wiped out - even in the face of Armageddon."

that Rorschach had just wandered out alone and died.

DAVE: Although I think that Veidt would have calculated the probability...and, really, there was nowhere else for Rorschach to go.

STEVE: *He knows he's going to die.*

DAVE: In that situation he could only die.

STEVE: *I know we're given ample demonstration of what a psycho and what a sociopath he is, but this almost makes him the hero of the story*

ALAN: We tried to make it so that all of them are the heroes. Like, Rorschach is, definitely, in that he never steps out of character — apart from that moment when you see him cry and he says "Go on — do it!"

STEVE: *The thing that reinforces that is that with Dan and Laurie you've had most of their motivations and their life histories explained to you but, next to Rorschach, they look like they're made of cardboard.*

ALAN: But next to Rorschach anybody would *We* would Because he's so intense...The thing is: at one level Veidt is the hero of WATCHMEN You can't take that away from him On another level, Dan and Laurie are because they are the only human characters in it.

STEVE: *Apart from the human cast, who you just get rid of in #11*

PETER: *That's another thing about Dr. Manhattan blowing away Rorschach — he looks at death differently.*

ALAN: He's always been removed from humanity but, especially since leaving Earth and going to Mars, he's just completely gone — especially that line about "I'll go and create some human life "

DAVE: The people who have the situation summed up at the very end — namely Ozymandias, Rorschach and Dr. Manhattan — all know that something like the scene in the snow was going to happen. So the death scene was something both Osterman and Rorschach knew they were going to have to play out Rorschach is just saying "You've got to do it so just *do* it!"

ALAN: He knows in issue #8. "I don't expect to come back; I feel cold tonight "

STEVE: *He finishes his diary*

ALAN: Yeah, that's it This is probably going to be quite difficult, you know There are so many layers and focusing on one element...I mean, good luck...carry on

STEVE: *The idea of doing a round table like this is that, with you here, we might get rid of a few WATCHMEN fallacies.*

ALAN: That's cool — it's just that when you've got the whole tapestry it's difficult to isolate one thread.

MARTIN: *One of the things I was interested in — getting on to the politics of it — was that you've said the hero is Ozymandias, who saves the world and sets it onto a new course — a very positive one from what we see in the concluding pages. Now, he's doing that through a benevolent dictatorship. It probably doesn't seem so but he's manipulating, controlling the whole world.*

STEVE: *With his role model revealed as Alexander the Great...*

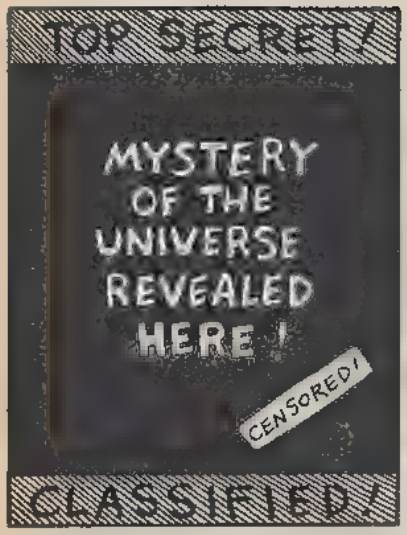
MARTIN: *So he's achieved what he*

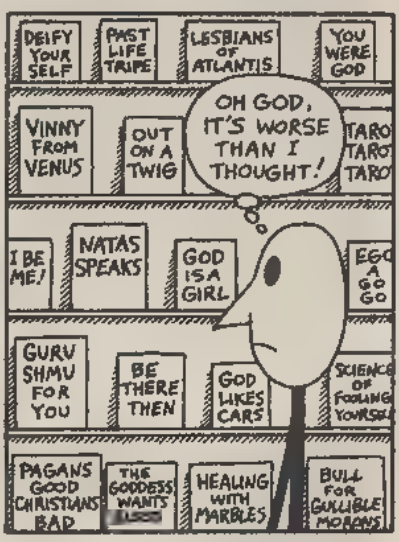
wanted to. But in another way the hero — the one who refuses to compromise is Rorschach. They're the two clearest cases — far clearer than Dr Manhattan, say. Now, to me, from what I know of your politics that's pretty contrary to your own ideas, Alan.

ALAN: Yes, but I'd be a pretty poor writer if all the characters that I did reflected my own politics.

All the characters in WATCHMEN have a bit of me in them. I mean, Dr. Manhattan has, Rorschach has and Veidt has...probably Dan and Laurie as well, to a degree. Amongst the many other things I was trying to say in WATCHMEN was just that in this world we live in, with all its disparate characters and ambitions there are probably no two people who want the same thing. The world doesn't work like that anyway. If there's a central line in WATCHMEN it s "Who makes the world?" Then again, that's just my opinion I'm sure other readers can find lines that are more meaningful to them, to me that's the core of it: you've got all these vast powers and Rorschach is a vast power in his own way just as Veidt is a vast financial power. You've got ordinary people just muddling along, you've got people who don't know what the fuck's happening — which is, like, most of humanity. You've got the Nixons and all this sort of stuff but...Who makes the world? Is the world really under the control of its most powerful people or are they just part of the design, the same as the rest?

DAVE: Referring to what Martin just said — there's also the question of what is a





DON'T BET ON IT!

By Dennis Worden

32-page b/w magazine

"Hilarious stuff, full of nihilism and agonizing over the big questions" —Robert Crumb

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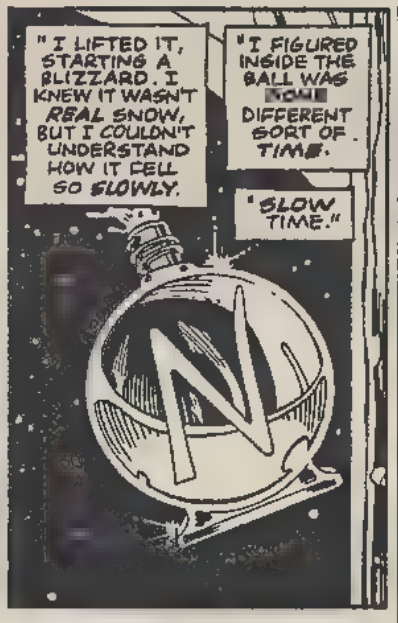
"We might do a MINUTEMAN book. There would be no sequel."

"...AND THERE WAS THIS TOY, THIS SNOWSTORM BALL, WITH A TINY CASTLE INSIDE, EXCEPT IT WAS LIKE A WHOLE WORLD, A WORLD INSIDE THE BALL...
"IT WAS LIKE A LITTLE GLASS BUBBLE OF SOMEWHERE ELSE."


"I LIFTED IT, STARTING A BLIZZARD. I KNEW IT WASN'T REAL SNOW, BUT I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND HOW IT FELL SO SLOWLY.
"I FIGURED INSIDE THE BALL WAS SOME DIFFERENT SORT OF TIME.
"SLOW TIME."

hero? You know, in their own way, almost anyone's actions could be interpreted as heroic

STEVE: *Even the Comedian.*

DAVE: You like them, even when you completely disagree with their stance.

STEVE: *The Comedian's is probably the one story begging to be told*

ALAN: The only possible spin-off we're thinking of is — maybe in four or five years time, ownership position permitting — we might do a Minuteman book. There would be no sequel.

STEVE: *The story I'm thinking of fits the gap between the end of the Minuteman at the beginning of the '50s and Comedian's career — with Ozymandias' interruption of that...*

ALAN: Hooded Justice.

DAVE: I think that's one of the things that adds to the book. When you think of people you know, there are certain areas of their lives you know a lot about and there are other areas you know nothing about — you get years and years where you don't know what happened to them

At one point that Comedian storyline was suggested to us by DC, to fill in the mosaic and define things. All it would do is to destroy the reality and dilute the whole thing. I think if you read the book closely and you're fairly intelligent, you can fill in that kind of thing... just as any work of art — a painting, a drawing or any written form of art — leaves a lot to your imagination anyway

STEVE: *Perhaps it is to the credit of the series that I've become particularly interested in one or two characters. It's like what you were saying about James M. Cain earlier, Dave — I have a similar fondness for Raymond Chandler which has advanced to the point where I want to read biographies and correspondence*

ALAN: You just want a little more of him.

STEVE: *All we read here is a series of events around these characters stretching over 12 weeks — something else that I thought was quite neat.*

DAVE: Now I didn't know that

STEVE: *Well, if it ends on December 29th it's 12 weeks.*

ALAN: I'm not surprised

DAVE: That's amazing because the story dictated how much time things took.

ALAN: Just before we get off the subject of serializations, continuations and sequels: when I set out to do WATCHMEN, and I imagine Dave felt the same way — that we didn't want to give people what they wanted, we set out to give them what they *needed*... and the same applies to sequels — they may want sequels really badly...

FIONA: *...but they don't need them. Sequels are the bane of comic books.*

ALAN: WATCHMEN is a novel It's *there* and it's got a beginning, a middle and an end... complete. **Frank Herbert** managed to turn **Dune** into a Perry Rhodan for the '80s with all those sequels It was a wonderful book to start with that was unreadable by the time it was finished

DAVE: It should be very clear in your mind who's in charge of any artistic endeavor. Obviously, Alan and I could make ourselves a fortune on WATCHMEN 2 next year I just can't think of any reason to do it other than the obvious monetary ones. Minutemen appeals because it's a different era and a different story.

STEVE: *Lesbian and homosexual relationships and costumed kinks in a '40s environment...*

ALL: Hmmmmmm..

PETER: *One of the key things about WATCHMEN is that the sexuality of all the characters is at least touched on...and the Comedian is a father...but what the hell is Osterman's sexuality like?*

MARTIN: *Years ago, Alan, I remember you saying that sexuality is a big part of a character and you should at least know what it is. You don't necessarily have to*

"A man who's been gifted - if indeed, he has been gifted

have it in the story. With Osterman there's not much of it there.

STEVE: *An interesting point — so Dr. Manhattan is, I persume, deliberately left as this blank slate, this "what the devil is he going to do next" type of character. There's no mention of his mother but he seems to have these really strange relationships with women with Laurie and with Janey Slater. I was convinced that when he was with Laurie on Mars and he was saying, "I can see the future... sort-of, and I'm killing somebody" that he was lying to her about not being able to tell who it was — the reason being that he could see himself murdering her. She his last link with humanity, his emotional link with his past.*

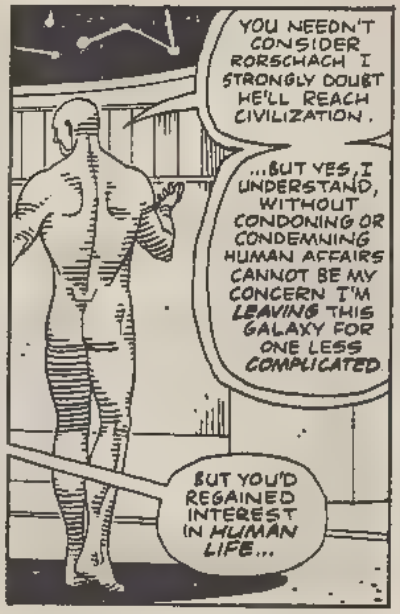
ALAN: Well, that was to some degree deliberate: we wanted people to think that — or that it was probably going to be Dan or Veidt. The only person we didn't want them to think of was Rorschach.

STEVE: *I'd work out that Ozymandias was too obvious..*

MARTIN: *The typical superhero confrontation...*

STEVE: *Dr. Manhattan seems, when he becomes "recorporated" in the last issue, subtlely altered — he refers to "Osterman" as somebody else. I looked to see if he still had the little circle on his forehead or if something else like that eye make-up had changed. I feel he should've looked different.*

FIONA: *Well, he's not he says "If that didn't kill Osterman..." as though the previous Dr. Manhattan was somehow Osterman... "and it won't kill me this time"*


YOU NEEDN'T CONSIDER RORSCHACH. I STRONGLY DOUBT HE'LL REACH CIVILIZATION.
...BUT YES, I UNDERSTAND, WITHOUT CONDONING OR CONDEMNING HUMAN AFFAIRS CANNOT BE MY CONCERN. I'M LEAVING THIS GALAXY FOR ONE LESS COMPLICATED
BUT YOU'D REGAINED INTEREST IN HUMAN LIFE...

YES, I HAVE. I THINK PERHAPS I'LL CREATE SOME
GOODBYE, ADRIAN
JON, WAIT, BEFORE YOU LEAVE...
I DID THE RIGHT THING, DIDN'T I? IT ALL WORKED OUT IN THE END.

DAVE: That didn't kill Osterman — it happened when he was dissolved.

ALAN: Osterman died in '59.

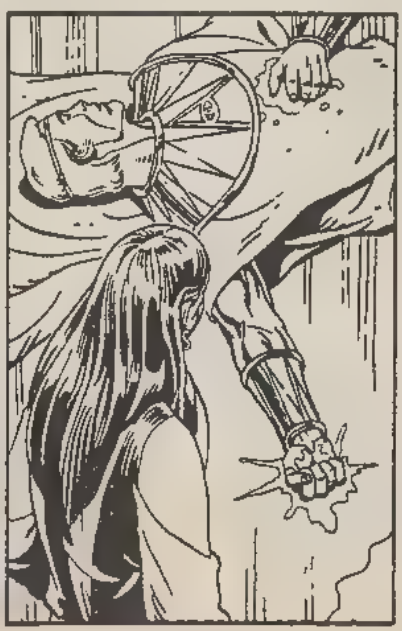
STEVE: *But his emotional attachment to people like Janey Slater...*

DAVE: That's just him trying to be normal — despite the fact that he's no longer a human being.

STEVE: *But his blitheness left him open to people like the Comedian and Ozymandias cussing him out, well-and-truly. It's quite a weakness when he thinks of himself as a god.*

DAVE: I don't think he does.

...THOUGH THIS STATIC MAKES SCANNING DIFFICULT. ALSO, THERE'S APPARENTLY MORE THAN ONE GENERATOR.
MOST ARE FAINT, BUT A PULSE FROM THE SOUTHERN POLAR REGION IS STRONG...
REASSURINGLY POWERFUL.



ALAN: To have the concept of "god" you have to be a human being in that when you are a god, the word "god" vanishes.

FIONA: *He's more like The Watcher or something — there to observe what interests him.*

ALAN: He's just Dr. Manhattan, and he's the only one in the universe and there are no rules.

MARTIN: *There's an idea for a sequel: in issue #12, the process that made Dr. Manhattan seems to be applied to Bubastis.*

ALAN: Bubastis the Super Cat, Dr Manhattan's Cat — Bubastis.

DAVE: Cats haven't got enough self-awareness to become..

FIONA: *It is a genetically engineered cat.*

MARTIN: *The Krypto of the '90s, I thought.*

DAVE: I suppose we could've done THE FLY and had Dr Manhattan come back with big, long, pointed pink ears!

ALL: *(Laughter.)*

ALAN: As far as Dr. Manhattan's character goes — when he becomes Dr Manhattan, his personality is that of John Osterman put through a very traumatic experience .but still that of Osterman, just about.

STEVE: *A John Osterman with totally new perceptions.*

ALAN: Yes, that and he's still got an awful lot of reflexive, habitual needs.

STEVE: *It's a personality, isn't it?*

FIONA: *But does his continual failure to have a human relationship drive him away from keeping those human habits?*

ALAN: I would think drive would be too

- with powers & abilities but who is not really Grade 'A.'"

strong a word He gradually gets bored with it.

DAVE: It's unappealing and unsatisfying.

FIONA: *Nowhere near as much fun as a few atoms*

ALAN: By the time Dr. Manhattan is a million years old, or a thousand years old, or even a hundred he will be almost unrecognizable -- but this is his infancy and you still see him doing things like. he pushes a door open in #11

MARTIN: *In #12 he walks from the pool to Ozymandias.*

ALAN: Right! There's no need. You see, sometimes a certain lack of consistency seems more realistic I just wanted him to seem so completely spaced out that we wouldn't be able to tell just how spaced he was. If he was simply spaced out, he would have just left Earth in 1959 and he wouldn't have let the army push him around

STEVE: *Something that caught my attention was your use of Kurt Vonnegut's Serial Time with relation to Dr. Manhattan*

ALAN: CAT'S CRADLE...

DAVE: SIRENS OF TITAN .

STEVE: *More SIRENS OF TITAN and SLAUGHTERHOUSE 5 — the idea of a man who doesn't have to lead his life in a punctual way, as Vonnegut puts it What strikes me is that Vonnegut knew that Serial Time couldn't work — it would drive anyone bananas, basically but if you use it in a comical way, a satirical, self mocking way which is Vonnegut's speciality — then it'll work really well. Someone as screwed up as Osterman would probably use Serial Time to go straight back to the womb — and for some reason Dr Manhattan's portrayal of a mother figure. You see what I mean about using Serial Time as a serious property?*

PETER: *I get the feeling that Dr. Manhattan is just pretty bemused. He knows what the future's going to be..*

STEVE: *Well...*

PETER: *Well, he has an awareness of it.*

STEVE: *All he knows is his own experiences all he knows is what his future's going to be.*

ALAN: Anybody here ever had a lucid dream? -- if you have a lucid dream, and you're good at it, you can do whatever you want to do in that dream You're Dr. Manhattan, basically, because you control the substance of reality but you find yourself surrounded by dream characters. You do what you want but you don't do anything to offend them out of basic politeness.

DAVE: Perhaps a better word than bemused would be distracted

MARTIN: *He wants firm ideas of what he's got to do — if people say "Go to Vietnam" or whatever...*

DAVE: That's an interesting thing...

MARTIN: *He's got no motivation at all. He needs to be told.*

DAVE: Here, we've got a man who's been gifted — if indeed, he has been gifted — with all those powers and abilities but who is not really Grade "A" superhero material. He's not a very strong character and he has no clear idea of what to do.

MARTIN: *He's naive and simple.*

DAVE: He's very intellectually

ITS TAR-STREAKED HULL ROLLED OVER ME IN DESPAIR I SANK BENEATH THOSE FOUL, PINK BILLOWS, OFFERING UP MY WRETCHED SOUL TO ALMIGHTY GOD, HIS MERCY AND HIS JUDGMENT.
'COURSE, THAT'S JUST MY OPINION
NY
EXPRESS

"If you're going to have a naked character in a comic

dependent.

FIONA: *That's right, his father says "You're not going to be a clockmaker, you're going to be a scientist" — and he is He's very manipulable.*

ALAN: Anything, for a quite life — that's Dr. Manhattan's point of view.

STEVE: *If you look at it from a philosophical point of view that's very...*

ALAN: Zen

STEVE: *Well, it's Tao.*

ALAN: It's a sort of still point where you no longer care about any other things

STEVE: *I'd like to think of Dr Manhattan like that but I don't think he's that profound Well ..not yet.*

One of the things I have written down here is a point about *the two big philosophical moments in WATCHMEN. they're at the ends of #s 6 and 9. Basically you've got Rorschach's treatise on...*

ALAN: All humanity is shit.

STEVE: *Yeah, it's just a mad planet, there's no god and we all just have to survive ..the reason I'm Rorschach is that I* decided *to do things this way and that decision empowers me to do anything That comes out really powerfully and forcefully and that's why #6 is so fucking depressing you know, you're looking at that last panel and there's nothing else, it's all black and* ooooh shiit

MARTIN: *The bit that got me was the psychiatrist saying that, at the end of the day, it's just black and white dots, it doesn't mean anything. Because as a symbol of the universe it's just empty, meaningless blackness*

STEVE: *"Some pretty flowers "*

DAVE: On one level you could say we're talking about the whole of Watchmen like that — as a rorschach inkblot

STEVE: *The other philosophical section consists of Dr Manhattan allowing Laurie to convince him that it is worth giving a damn about Earth again. When I finished #9 I found myself thinking "I don't believe him, I'm not convinced." I thought he was either lying to her or letting himself believe in this — you know, all that stuff about thermodynamics.*

MARTIN: *He knew he was going to believe*

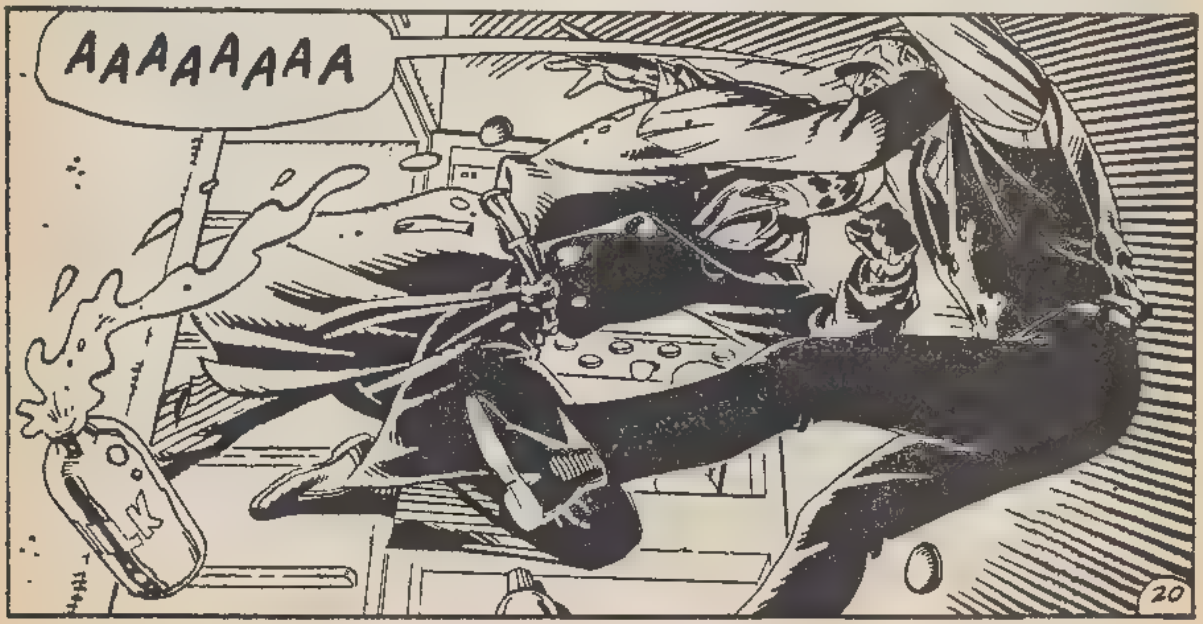
FIONA: *He has a different perception, because in #12 he cares about Life, then he looks at the globe and says "I think I'll go and create some life somewhere else " So he doesn't care about life in general.*

ALAN: He cares about the abstract

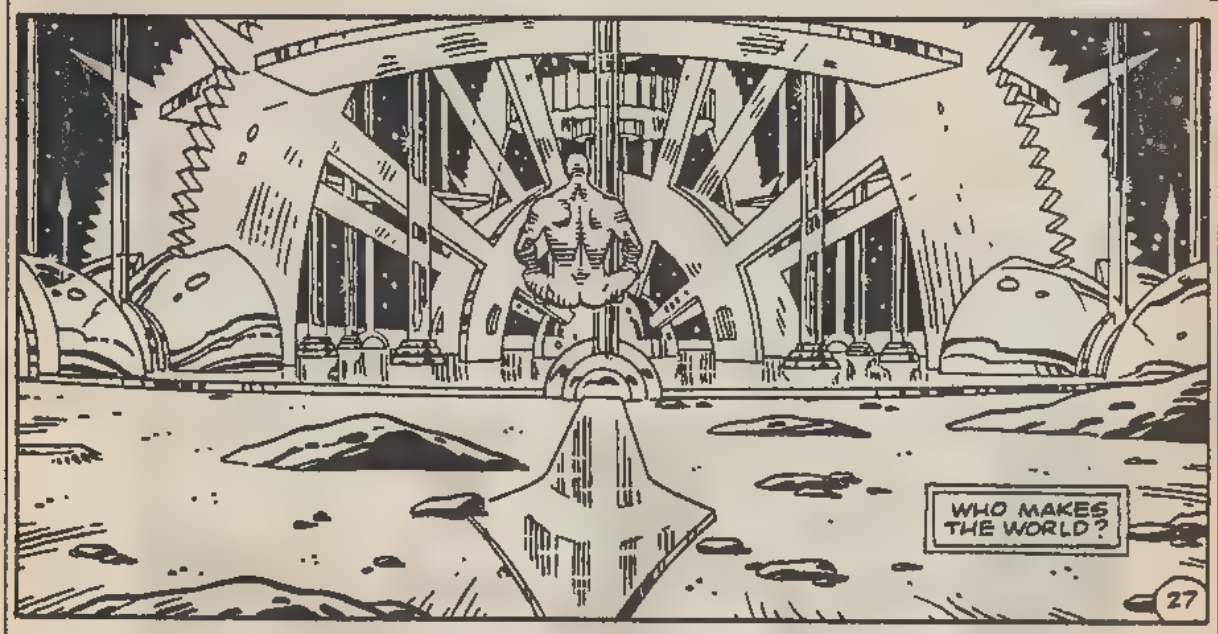
PETER: *Well, that's the Comedian's line in the Vietnam sequence...You could have done any of these things to stop me shooting this woman and you didn't. You don't care!*

FIONA: *He does care about life, but not life as we automatically think of it.*

DAVE: He doesn't care about life



book he's almost by definition got to be the least sexual."



emotionally, he cares about it scientifically.

ALAN: In his discussion with Laurie, at no point at the end does he say that he cares emotionally about it, it's just more interesting than he thought it was.

STEVE: *He just can't involve himself, whereas Rorschach —*

FIONA: *But we've got no evidence he ever could involve himself*

STEVE: *Rorschach more or less comes to the same conclusion, "Tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," from then on you can do anything, the world is yours, if you like.*

DAVE: I think what he's doing in #9 is kind of letting Laurie be remote conscience.

ALAN: In some ways

DAVE: She's running through it and he thinks "Yeah, that's right."

MARTIN: *Well, he lets just about anybody do that. He's already seen this in the future and so he doesn't resist it. Anyway, it suits him.*

STEVE: *In many ways the worry is that she isn't even paying attention to him, she's having one of the most traumatic experiences of her whole life*

MARTIN: *In #12 when he says "I'm off to another galaxy where I can create" — that's the first time he seems to make any decision for himself*

FIONA: *It's almost not a decision anyway. It's like being slowly and cautiously elbowed out of their lives.*

ALAN: It is a decision of sorts, but is a Dr Manhattan decision in that it's a decision to walk away from the whole situation, you know

DAVE: If he was to stay around on Earth he's going to run up against some big decisions.

FIONA: *...and some big moral problems, but he just shuts himself off*

STEVE: *Dave, did you actually decide on the gradual nakedness of Dr. Manhattan from the beginning with his silly littlesuit and thumbed nose to the Captain Atom costume — right the way through to him being completely in the buff.*

DAVE: It's just a symbol of him gradually disassociating himself from what humanity considers to be needful.

STEVE: *But the most curious thing about it is that there's no body language to go with it. He doesn't use his nakedness at all*

ALAN: Well, if you're going to have a naked character in a comic book he's almost by definition got to be the least sexual. What I remember — and this all gets very blurred when you're talking about two years ago — the thing I remember is that Dave drew a naked figure of Dr Manhattan just to show his physique, and I looked at it and thought that would be pretty rad. — Let's just not put any clothes on it. Me and Dave agreed but we didn't know if we'd get away with

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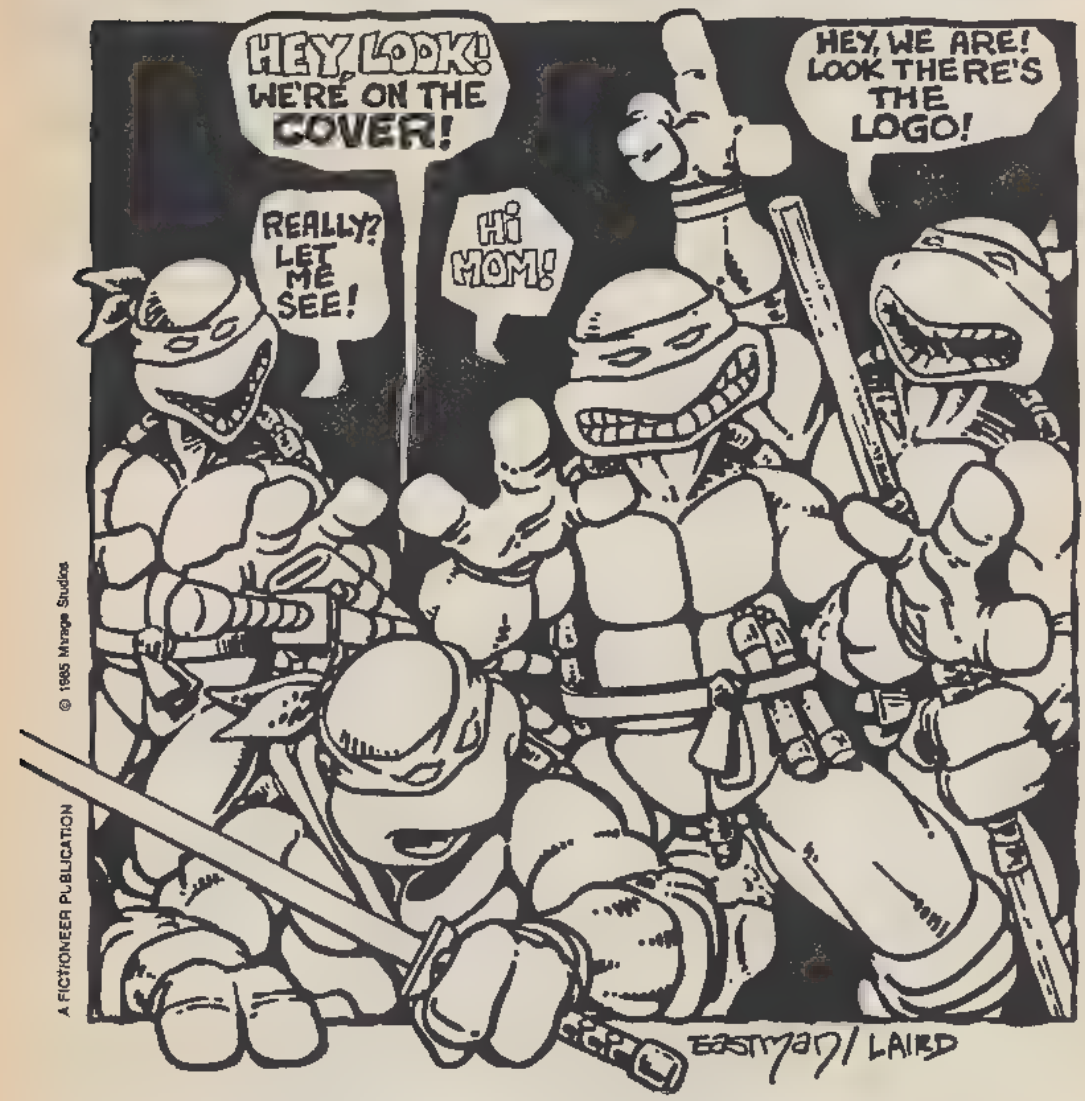

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"Body language is a way of showing emotion and it's crucial."

it, and Dave said, look if we make it very hairless, take away all the human references for sex, like hair

FIONA: *Make the genitals that little symbol.*

ALAN: Like **Michaelangelo's** "David."

DAVE: And, indeed, I've got a plaster cast of **Michaelangelo's** "David" on my windowsill

ALAN: And working that out, we thought it would show the gradual disassociation of Dr Manhattan first he's willing to put on the full uniform, but he doesn't like the helmet, then later on he just has the leotard thing, then just for the sake of decency he'll wear his little G-String, and then fuck it, why bother, I'm Dr Manhattan, I can walk around how I like.

STEVE: *But then there is a lot of body language in other figures you draw.*

DAVE: Oh sure, body language is a way of showing emotion and it's crucial that he doesn't show emotion But the thing about showing him naked was that point when most people first saw him, I don't think they realized he was naked because we deliberately did it in a completely non sexual, lonely, distant.

MARTIN: *You didn't show his genitals, either*

DAVE: No, but it's a question of where and when you show his genitals

MARTIN: *Basically we're used to seeing people in skintight costumes anyway, so it wouldn't immediately register*

DAVE: What we didn't want to do was another **Burne Hogarth** Tarzan as a boy —

ALAN: Here's another branch!

DAVE: The point at which we do show them is critical Theres the scene — I think it's in #3 — where he's in bed with Laurie and we didn't show them there purposely because it would not have been allowed

ALAN: Not in a sexual context

DAVE: When you did see them he was wandering through a red barn in the desert, or something.

MARTIN: *And by that time you don't notice it. I remember thinking, "Aren't they tiny? if I were the most powerful man in the world..."*

STEVE: *He doesn't care about that*

DAVE: That's not the problem, really

FIONA: *There's no point in the male display aspect of it all, so he doesn't bother*

DAVE: But you can see that the next stage of his evolution is becoming an asexual being who doesn't display characteristics of either

STEVE: *I was surprised that he didn't change when he re-corporated himself Maybe that was just too messy to do in the last 14 pages or so.*

DAVE: You'd have thought it had much more significance than it did.

STEVE: *There is a strange sort of feudal system in WATCHMEN where you have Ozy who thinks he's a god, and Dr. Manhattan who, to all intents and purposes, is — then you've got the people in the costumes who've set themselves up as vigilantes, as superheroes, and then you've also got the people in "Tales of the Black Freighter" who are even more —*

DAVE: — Sub-human.

STEVE: *Did you find you had to separate the way they related to each other? I find the way the news vendor and the kid — take two Bernards relate to each other. and the taxi driver and all that lot, they're far more physical, they're living in a real world where far more things happen to them, whereas these superheroes have formal relationships where they stand around and talk to each other*

DAVE: But how do you think people relate to one another at oscar ceremonies, or at **Joan Collins'** parties?

ALAN: With the human characters I wanted to show that all the way through the entire series human life is going on with all of its petty entanglements and minor difficulties and all the rest of it —

DAVE: Thirst

ALAN: Thirst, yeah - and sort of...

STEVE: *Ha ha.*

FIONA: *Do you want to switch the tape off, Dave?*

ALAN: What **Nixon** does and what Dr Manhattan does and what Veidt does - it effects the people on the street corner but only peripherally, indirectly. And yet, in some ways, those people on the street corner, it's their story. They're the people we're concerned about

STEVE: *All the way through it you're waiting to hear the tale of the Black Frieghter even though you even get told the ending before the ending in one of your appendixes I remember turning round to someone and saying "But I know the ending, it's in #9," and What? Hey! you know, he's being destroyed by himself*

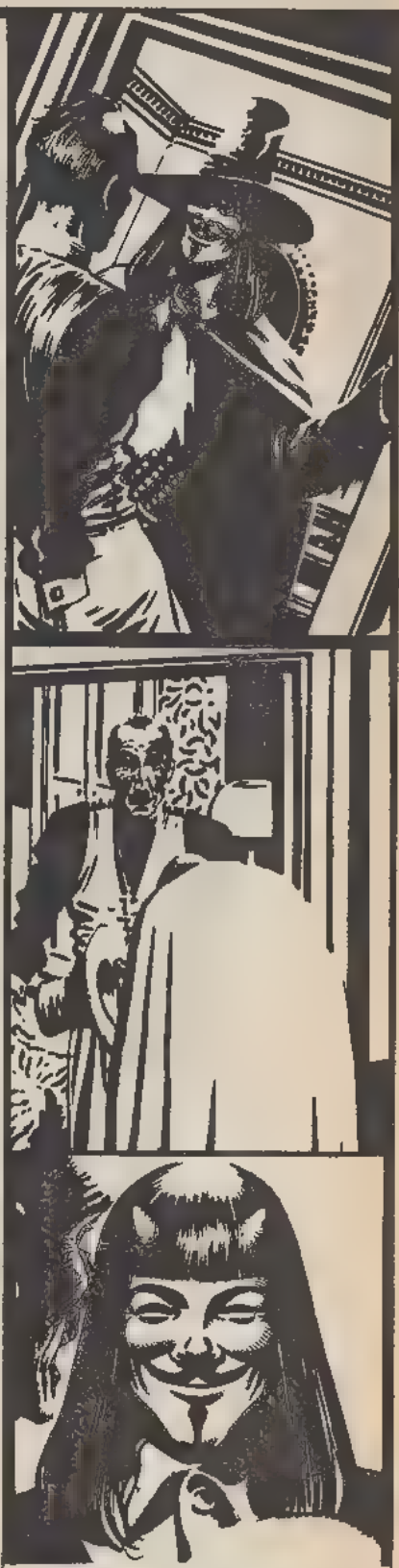
MARTIN: *Allegory.*

STEVE: *It's another level of reality to remind you that this is a comic*

ALAN: Well, no, it's not actually to remind you that this is a comic Someone did an interview with me recently and said, "This seems to be referential, you know, wake up, this is a comic."

FIONA: *Steve and I both noticed that as the comic progresses you're getting the same kind of strong line coloring that you get in the Black Freighter story.*

STEVE: *It might just be John Higgins*



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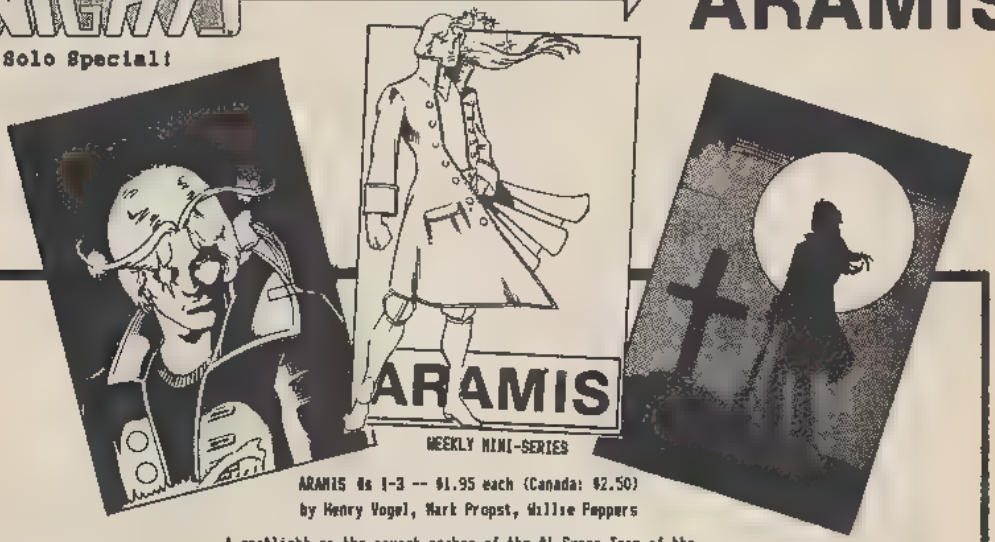

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THE 25th CENTURY. THEY NEED NO DEATH PENALTY. THEY HAVE

CYCOPS

BOOK 1 OF THREE

by JULIE WOODCOCK
& BRIAN STELFREEZE

THE 25th CENTURY. THEY NEED NO DEATH PENALTY. THEY HAVE

CYCOPS™

Dear Chuck:

You've got to be kidding! The Cycops as presidential Storm Troopers? Come on! Still, if you've got doubts, I'll try to set your mind at ease.

First, the Cycop Force is a division of the Interstellar Bureau of Criminal Investigation. The IBCI answers to the Department of Interstellar Justice. Yes, I know you know that. The point is, I'm not even in the chain of command. The accusation that the Cycops are my private army -- well, that's absurd.

The Cycops' true purpose is the same as it's been for the last 50 years. the protection of human rights. That's what we're here for, that's why the Human Coalition was formed· to guarantee civil rights on all worlds inhabited by humans. The Cycops make damn sure we all do our jobs.

To answer your questions about the Cycops themselves: no, they aren't supermen. Yes, a Cycop can lift 2000 pounds. He can punch a hole through two inches of dura-steel. He can f'ght an army single-handedly. But only in Overdrive. The rest of the time, he's no stronger than you or I And he can't stay in Overdrive longer than 30 minutes, because the stress will kill him.

As for the M-suits· I can't believe you swallowed that rumor about invincible armored warriors waiting to overthrow the Coalition. The Cycops' M-suits are designed to absorb impact. Otherwise, if a 'cop tried to put his fist through a two-inch dura-steel plate, he'd break every bone in his hand. The suit would also provide extra skeletal support if he tried to lift 2000 pounds But an M-suit won't stop beam weapons -- like blazers -- so it hardly makes a Cycop invulnerable.

Now, about their internal computers you've got that part right -- there probably isn't a computer system around that a Cycop and his comp can't break into. That's why we formed the Cycop Force in the first place (you'd be surprised at the kind of incriminating evidence some people will store in a computer). But in order to get that evidence in spite of sophisticated security programs, you need a computer which is pretty sophisticated, itself. And we just don't build them any more sophisticated than the one in a Cycop's skull.

I can't really tell you exactly how the process works -- I'm not a cybernetics expert -- but the 'tecs implant a tiny seed (more like a virus, really) in the brain of the future 'cop. That seed grows into a network that twines all through the brain tissue. No strand of that network is thicker than a few molecules, yet it interfaces with the Cycop's own nervous system The result is a computer of extraordinary power and abilities.

Using the comp's control over his involuntary nervous system, a Cycop can go into Overdrive, or block out pain. It's also the computer that makes him inhumanly accurate with weapons, and that gives him access to data from the sensors implanted throughout his body.

I must agree with you that the cost is very high I don't like the idea of drafting five-year-olds any more than you do. Unfortunately, the implant process tends to kill anybody over six. The decision to use orphans because of that mortality rate was cold-blooded, but it was also necessary to protect the government from lawsuits by any relatives of the children.

There is no doubt, however, of the benefits of the twelve years of training these children receive at Cycop Academy. All that martial arts and weapons instruction, as well as the classes in criminal law and programming, results in superb officers. Of course, it hardly makes for a normal childhood. .

It's also unfortunate that one of the effects of Overdrive is the greatly reduced lifespan, but that was the price we had to pay It's as if they live twice the life of the rest of us, so they live only half as long

In short, Chuck, I really don't think the Cycops deserve your fear. What they do deserve is your gratitude.

And, perhaps, your sympathy.

– President Dale Kamdr
September 29, 2453

by JULIE WOODCOCK & BRIAN STELFREEZE

CYCOPS
BOOK 2 OF THREE
by JULIE WOODCOCK
& BRIAN STEELFREEZE

THE 25th CENTURY. THEY NEED NO
CY. THEY HAVE
CYCOPS
BOOK 3 OF THREE
by JULIE WOODCOCK
& BRIAN STELFREEZE

"There's a whole team of ladies who separate these books."

disgust with the way that DC has this separated.

FIONA: *Early on, you don't get these very extreme colors next to each other.*

STEVE: *Straight lines like this, where no attempt is made for the color to follow the shape and form.*

ALAN: Good grief.

DAVE: Uhh well, that is just one of the penalties of doing something like this.

FIONA: *There's not any effort to follow contour*

ALAN: Well, that would probably be the separator

FIONA: *Shit, we thought it was some meaningful thing.*

DAVE: There's a whole team of ladies who separate these books on piece work

STEVE: *I've separated comics, I know what it's like.*

DAVE: No matter how thoroughly Alan and I set something out, no matter how profoundly you analyze it, along the line there is that slippage.

STEVE: *It's so sad to know that John can produce something like this on the cover, and for just a few more bucks they could get John to handcolor it. His coloring is so good.*

DAVE: It's a case of "If I knew then what I know now." Once the first issue of Watchmen came out there would have been no doubt.

STEVE: *Is there no chance of a collection being done like that — a deluxe Watchmen?*

DAVE: Then they'd have to completely re-color the whole thing. Personally I would rather have had the book separated as it was but printed on newsprint or Mando paper, because I think that would have softened it

FIONA: *Then those extremes of color wouldn't have come up.*

STEVE: *The nice thing about that would be that the screen wouldn't have been so fine and consequently the color wouldn't have been so flat. With a coarser screen you get more activated color. . .you see the dots, it enlivens the image.*

DAVE: If you look at something like **Barry Smith's** Machine Man, which was printed on newsprint, it was great because there were no edges to the color, they all just blended into each other.

STEVE: *Well to some extent that was because the separators just didn't know what to do with his color roughs.*

DAVE: Baxter paper with hand separated color is the worst compromise. On the other hand there is something essentially "comic book" about it, a refusal to go into subtlety, which I like about it, and there are things that I purposely didn't do with the coloring, like have color holds where you get an image printed in a different color, but I purposely didn't do that —

I wanted to say that this is a comic book, there are lines round things, then they are colored in

STEVE: *I wondered about that in things like the Black Freighter pages, which are printed in the same way, and are drawn in more or less the same style, where John goes for traffic-light colors.*

ALAN: John deliberately went for garish colors

STEVE: *But by the end of it you're getting these colors in the rest of the strip. . .*

ALAN: It wasn't deliberate.

STEVE: *It becomes less and less realistic*

DAVE: I don't think so, although in the particularly dramatic bits — say the attempted rape scene in issue #2 or the fight that Dan and Laurie have in issue #3 — John purposely ups the color temperatures

ALAN: Dave and I presumed his logic with issue #12 was just to make the whole thing more exciting. In #6 you can see something that John did

STEVE: *His secret plan*

ALAN: Yes, Dave said that John had this secret plan: starts off quite sunny and then gradually over the course of the issue it gets darker and darker and gloomier and more dismal . .it's subtle stuff

STEVE: *He uses all those colored greys you can get in that process, that he wouldn't have got in a newsprint process.*

DAVE: Well, I've said this before - John has put effort into this above and beyond the call of duty as a colorist

STEVE: *It's such an important part of the comic, I think.*

ALAN: What you were saying about the pirate story in general — like why it was there . .Well it was there because it provides another layer that you can use to bounce off meanings against each other. That's one thing. It's also that various elements in the pirate story relate, or seem to relate, to what's happening in that issue. When Rorschach is in jail there's a bit in

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"If you look at something like Barry Smith's MACHINE MAN, which was printed on newsprint, it was great. . . "

"Bernard the Elder, is in some ways every man, because

RESTRUCTURING MYSELF AFTER THE SUBTRACTION OF MY INTRINSIC FIELD WAS THE FIRST TRICK I LEARNED IT DIDN'T KILL OSTERMAN...
DID YOU THINK IT WOULD KILL ME?

the pirate story with someone talking about the dead shark. its snarl no longer convincing -

PETER: *You get some nice irony coming in there*

ALAN: And there's Dr. Manhattan's isolation in #3, him going to Mars, in exile, is like the exile of the mariner, but when you get right to the end of the story, in #12 it becomes very clear that the story was about Veidt all the time, that the mariner is Veidt

Just that bit where he says at the end, "I know people think me callous, but I've made myself feel every death; by day I imagine endless faces, by night I dream about swimming towards a Well, I won't tell you, it's not significant. What is significant is that I know I've struggled across the backs of murdered innocents to save humanity."

FIONA: *That's literally what the mad man, or the not so mad man on the raft has done, isn't it?*

DAVE: Also we didn't put it in for self-referential purposes, but it does acknowledge the presence of comics in people's lives and what the kid on the corner is doing is exactly what you're doing, he is trying to read his comic while people are talking to him, and that's a form of withdrawal from the world, a form of looking for something else

FIONA: *There seems to me to be a very well thought-out concept of what the reader of this book is going to be, what kind of person, what kind of reactions they're going to have — which Steve and I were talking about earlier. The thing with Dan being the equivalent of the professional comics virgin, who replaces sex and human interaction with his birds — he goes out to play in his costume It's the same sort of behavior you get with fans who replace a real life with comic books and fantasy*

PETER: *And Laurie plays along with that That's obviously their only means of social intercourse*

DAVE: I don't think the kid who's reading the comic on the corner is what you'd call a comics fan, actually

MARTIN: *He's like I was when I was 8. I'd buy a comic — a Marvel comic — because I thought the cover looked nice, and I'd get home and read it, and I'd feel cheated, because it was a continued story*

DAVE: I think this is a key to the lad's character — when the news vendor gives him the comic he doesn't immediately put it into a mylar bag, he rolls it up and sticks it in his back pocket Some day all comics will be treated this way *(Chorus of agreement).*

ALAN: You know, that's the thing, there is that degree of self-referential world within world, but with the pirate story... Pirates were Dave's idea, we just said "What comics would they read in this world?" and Dave said, "What about pirates?"

FIONA: *Why wouldn't they have superhero comics?*

ALAN: Because they've got the real ones.

FIONA: *But when the West was still going they were producing a hell of a lot of pulp material about real cowboys.*

STEVE: (Returning with drinks). *That's yours, I think.*

FIONA: *I don't see why — thanks — superheroes couldn't continue to exist.*

ALAN: These days I don't know — The Human Fly didn't last very long, Steve.

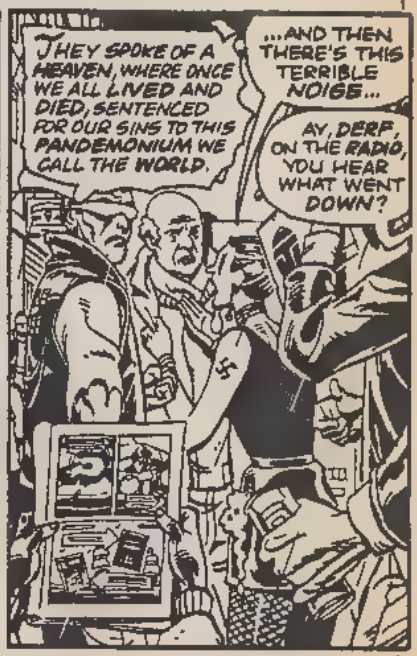
STEVE: *Didn't they find that he'd broken his leg doing a stunt or something?*

DAVE: I think if there were real superheroes in the world — not fantasy but real costumed characters — you'd immediately see the fallacy of it.

ALAN: And also people actually liked the cowboys, whereas —

FIONA: *— people don't really like the*

SURE YOU'D RATHER BE AT MADISON SQUARE WITH A BUNCH'A DOPED-UP KNOT-TOPS. LIKE THAT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN US, RIGHT?
OH SHIT, LOOK, THIS ISN'T WORKING OUT I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY WAY WE CAN SALVAGE THIS RELATIONSHIP.


THEY SPOKE OF A HEAVEN, WHERE ONCE WE ALL LIVED AND DIED, SENTENCED FOR OUR SINS TO THIS PANDEMONIUM WE CALL THE WORLD.
...AND THEN THERE'S THIS TERRIBLE NOISE...
AY, DERP, ON THE RADIO, YOU HEAR WHAT WENT DOWN?

he's a complete pratt and doesn't know what's going on."

heroes in Watchmen, do they?

MARTIN: *The real superheroes who exist in your world aren't called superheroes The only one with any superpowers is Dr. Manhattan, and he doesn't act a great deal like Superman, so as you say, the fallacy . . .*

FIONA: *They're all incredibly screwed up by trying to be masked adventurers.*

STEVE: *You've still got people like Giant Haystacks and Geoff Capes, who people think of as strong men.*

MARTIN: *Hulk Hogan, the champion wrestler, has his own cartoon series in America.*

FIONA: *The Hulkster.*

ALAN: The problem would still be, if you went thoroughly into the Watchmen there would probably be one company that does superheroes — they just don't sell very well

DAVE: They'd probably be like Archie.

ALAN: Whereas the piracy thing — we chose piracy purely at random but after thinking about it it turned out to be a really good choice, because the world of the pirate stories is a very amoral world.

DAVE: Just to blow my own trumpet, I didn't make that suggestion completely at random, I knew they'd be full of color and adventure and color and that's something I like to see in comics

STEVE: *Was it serendipity that you had Joe Orlando there who had actually worked on pirate comics?*

DAVE: I suppose it was

ALAN: Everything was serendipity

DAVE: You can actually see — Alan could probably describe this better than me — but it wasn't until he actually started writing issues #3 that the pirate thing became such a big element If you look at issue #1 you'll see when the two detective walk out of Blake s apartment building there is almost the embryo of the situation at the end. There is a newsstand with a kid sitting reading a pirate comic and that was done before.

STEVE: *That's a bit of a glitch isn't it? Because that building isn't on the crossroads.*

DAVE: It was never supposed to be on that crossroads

ALAN: It was a different newsstand

STEVE: *I always make that mistake.*

DAVE: It was never intended to be the same place. That would really be one coincidence too far.

FIONA: *From the point of view of having one coincidence too far — you've got this very well orchestrated universe of the crossroads where you have so much coincidence in that everybody's there —*

STEVE: *It's the center state, isn't it?*

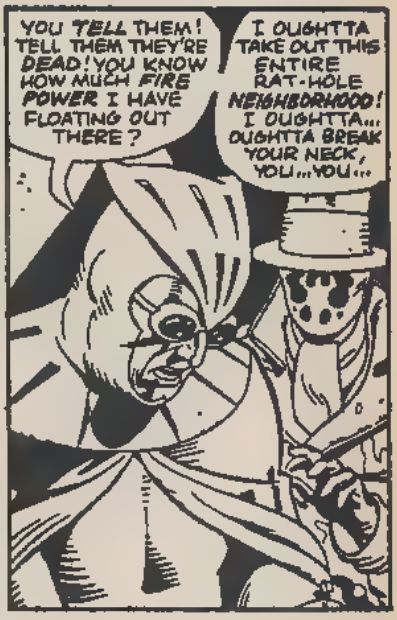
MARTIN: *I was very fond of Bernard. I liked him and all his opinions on the world.*

ALAN: And also he, Bernard the Elder, is in some ways every man, because he's a complete pratt and doesn't know what's going on

FIONA: *He changes his mind from one minute to another.*

PETER: *Depending on what's in the paper*

DAVE: Someone was saying earlier about Glenda Slag. You can always look at two sides of a problem and make something out of both


YOU TELL THEM! TELL THEM THEY'RE DEAD! YOU KNOW HOW MUCH FIRE POWER I HAVE FLOATING OUT THERE?
I OUGHTTA TAKE OUT THIS ENTIRE RAT-HOLE NEIGHBORHOOD! I OUGHTTA... OUGHTTA BREAK YOUR NECK, YOU...YOU...

ALAN: He is like a lot of people, he is a function of the news

MARTIN: *He just regurgitates.*

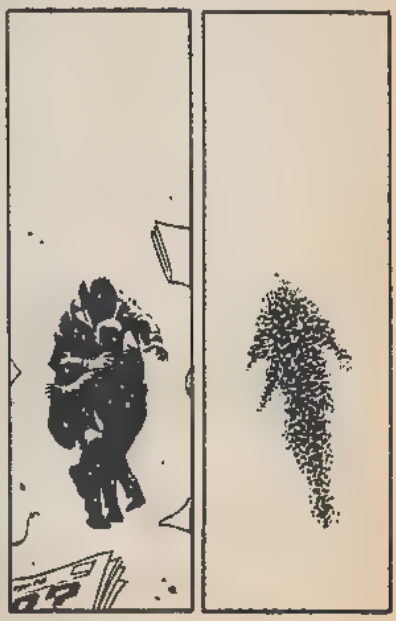
ALAN: And thinks that's an opinion. As the series goes on you start to see — he becomes a character that when you get through all the bullshit you just see this lonely little man.

STEVE: *Yeah. I liked Bernard That last gesture of. .*

ALAN: Trying to get between the kid and the explosion .

STEVE: *. . .making that the drip on the side of the vivarium and the badge, and the character is really nice, it's a poetic*

SO, WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS...
I'M SAYING LET'S NOT RAISE TOO MUCH DUST OVER THIS ONE WE DON'T NEED ANY MASKED AVENGERS GETTING INTERESTED AND CUTTING IN
FOLLOW IT UP DISCREETLY, SURE. BUT IN PUBLIC...



"Dave at one point nearly built a 3-D model of the crossroads."

statement about how important he is to the texture of it

PETER: *It's a cool, it's a major cool.*

DAVE: That corner and its inhabitants meant as much to us as any of the individual characters because, in a way, that is the ordinary person

FIONA: *And it's a representation of the human world, isn't it?*

STEVE: *The News of the World — "All human life is here!"*

ALAN: If superheroes and supervillains, as they do in comics, confine themselves to the same battles then there's no problem It's like the police never worry about the underworld shoving each other until somebody gets hurt The thing with the human characters was: "Shit, hang on a minute, these are the ones it's all happening to, they're the civilians, the ones who really pay for all this "

STEVE: (Opening a copy of #12) *In #12 you've got a body count.*

FIONA: *It's the curtain call*

STEVE: *You've got the watchseller, who's a really nice, quiet little joke all the way through. You never see him.*

DAVE: He is the Watchman

STEVE: *You've got the two cops on page 4, Steve Fine and whatshisname.*

FIONA: *The one who never says much.*

STEVE: *You've got Joey and Aline, Dr Long and his wife . . .*

FIONA: *And the recurring graffiti shadow of lovers*

STEVE: *. . . You've got the two Promethian Cab men and this mysterious figure with the newspaper over his face.*

ALAN: That's Steve Fine, the other tec

STEVE: *No, that's Steve Fine there, surely?*

ALAN AND DAVE: No, no, that's just the way the guy who in #11 was coming out

STEVE: *You know, I've wondered just what the devil that guy was doing there, why that body had to be there with the gun in the shoulder holster*

FIONA: *We've had mystic significances for this guy. Steve and I thought that was Steve Fine there*

DAVE: No, no, no, that's someone who's just come out of the Gunga Diner In fact, Laurie refers to him, saying "All these people just went out for a take-out Tandoori "

STEVE: *I thought he was a symbolic figure of the Comedian*

FIONA: *Fallen on the pavement*

STEVE: *. . . And she takes the gun from her father, and that you put it in as another bit of ironic poetry*

DAVE: If you refer back to issue #11 he's just run around the front of the car so, as the disaster happened, that's where he would be.

ALAN: Issue #11 was perfectly choreographed

FIONA: *You got the action figures out and played around with them.*

ALAN: Dave at one point nearly built a 3-D model of the crossroads

FIONA: *I can understand that it would be very very useful.*

STEVE: *Well, this is a 360 degree pan, isn't it?*

DAVE: Yeah

STEVE: *From the center of the crossroads*

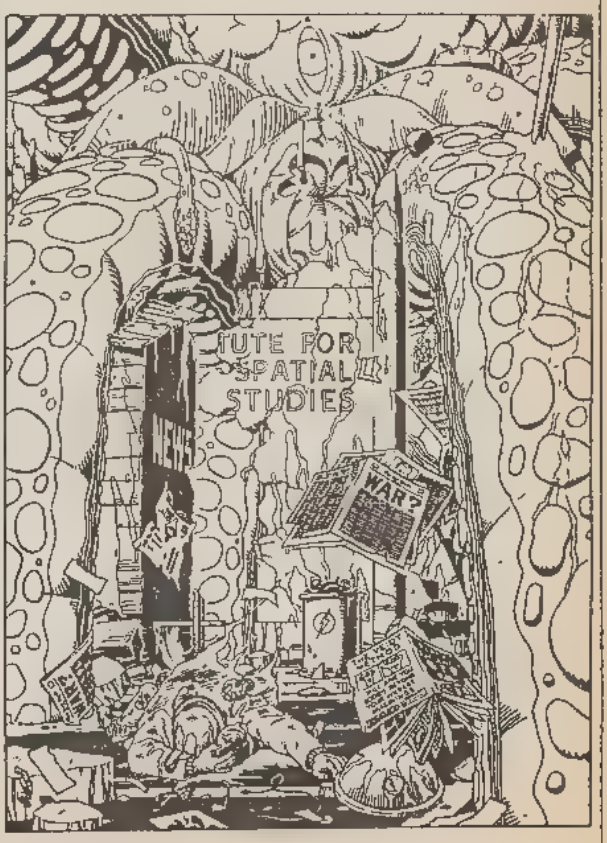
ALAN: You pull back from there to the center of the crossroads then you turn round very slowly. The one spot that you never see is where Jon and Laurie are standing.

DAVE: I didn't actually make a model of it, although when we first conceived it I did draw a street map

ALAN: Well, we checked it up on a map of New York

"I didn't actually make a model... I did draw a street map."

FIONA: *It's really there?*
DAVE: It's a feasible corner — I've got a map at home
STEVE: *I noticed you put Forbidden Planet N.Y. in there at one stage — where they're selling all the pirate comics.*
ALAN AND DAVE: No, that's Treasure Island
DAVE: Which would, if you had pirate comics, be FP At home I've got this brilliant map they do which is an isometric projection of New York, so not only is it a street map but it's all the buildings standing up and it's got all the post boxes and the trees.
ALAN: It's lovely, it's a work of art – you can wander round New York in your head
DAVE: It's about this big but ..you know the joke about New York people look at it and say "When's it going to be finished?" It's the same with this map, it's never actually finished because as fast as they put buildings in it, other ones are torn down. There are places in it where there's just a site with a crane or something
MARTIN: *Oh, I'd love a copy of that*
DAVE: This corner which we choose well, we haven t thought out the precise route, say, from Dan Dreiberg's house up to Hollis Mason's house
STEVE: *But it's pretty close, isn't it?*
ALAN: But we've at least got an idea of whether it's east or west.
STEVE: *So you just run down the road with a bunch of knot tops and then go down this alleyway an it's there*
ALAN: But there might be a few streets in-between that we didn't show
FIONA: *So don't go looking, Steve, when you visit New York.*
DAVE: But that corner, I'm sure that at some time I've been to New York I must have walked past that corner In fact, what I'd really like to do, the next time I go, is actually walk to that junction and see what's there On the isometric map there is a fairly new high rise building which could be the Institute for Extra Terrestrials, another building which looks like a cinema to me because it's got a curved front, and there are some other, lower buildings
STEVE: *And a fast food chain, perhaps?*
DAVE: That intersection is feasible, right down to the way that the sun rises. This isn't just down to me Alan obviously made specific provision for this in his script. The sun actually does rise in the east and sets in the west, and if you look at the thing, if it's afternoon the shadows are going this way and in the mornings the shadows are going the other way
STEVE: *Just like when you're reading a novel, you appreciate when someone actually goes into detail in an elegant way There are some very elegant things in both the writing and the art. You've got things like that lovely tunnel through the comic in #4 where you actually see the viewpoint from the newsstand with Dan and Laurie across the road and then something like 11 pages later you see Dan and Laurie talking to each other with the newsstand in the background...In #11 it's really important that you observe the goings on at the newsstand and as you're reading it you realize that each time you jump back to Earth and the crossroads...*
FIONA. *...you're moving in time.*
STEVE: *Right! But you don't go back to the same moment as before you jump back a few seconds*
ALAN: That's right
STEVE: *You see Mrs Long approach the newsstand and say "My husband is a man of color" and then the next time you read it she's still walking towards it. Time is*



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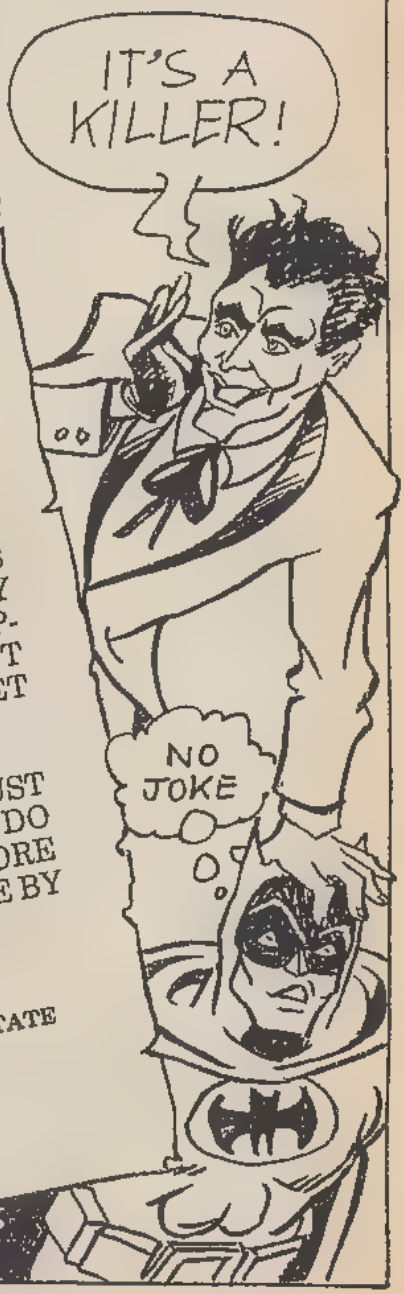


"Alan - he can clearly visualize the scene."

being played with. Very unlike #2, #11's symmetrical twin, where you get a simple flashback situation.

DAVE: It's difficult to set these things up initially, but it's amazing the amount of pleasure it gives you when it's there, and it must be so for Alan writing it — he can clearly visualize the scene because he knows how far it is from here to there, and where everything is

ALAN: What we were saying about structure earlier on . . . there's all the clever metaphysical structure of WATCHMEN and all the little threads and chords and notes running through it, but the big thing is that chronologically it works. It's timed exactly; we know when everything happened There was a cock-up where I think we gave two dates for the Silk Spectre's birthday, that's the only one I think we give '49 and '50 as the date of her birth. We can correct that in the book And geographically it works

MARTIN: *I've noticed this every step of the way: You actually know what a building looks like . . .*

ALAN: There are not infinite doors to every room

STEVE: *The Avengers' mansion or the Batcave -- how many entrances are there*

MAXWELL THE MAGIC CAT — by Jill de Ray

CAT FOOD
CAT FOOD
CAT FOOD
CAT FOOD
?
DENNIS?
YES, MAX?
IS THAT MY TAIL OR YOURS DOWN THERE?
HMM. WELL, I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS MINE.
.. BUT I SUPPOSE IT COULD BE YOURS
HMM IT FEELS LIKE MINE
MAYBE WE COULD SHARE IT?
WHAT A GREAT IDEA! TAIL SHARING!! WHY, YOU COULD WRITE A BOOK ABOUT IT
WHAT WOULD YOU CALL IT??
HOW ABOUT "A TAIL OF TWO KITTIES"?
EVERYBODY HATES FLEAS
MAYBE IF THEY KNEW HOW TOUGH WE FLEAS HAVE IT THEY MIGHT HAVE A LITTLE MORE SYMPATHY!!
O.K. .SO WE DRINK BLOOD!
YOU THINK WE ENJOY DRINKING BLOOD??? HMMF DO YA???
.DRINKING BLOOD IS VILE!!!
..ALSO, BLOOD IS VERY DIFF--ICULT TO GET HOLD OF.
YOU TRY GOING INTO A BAR AND ASKING FOR TWO PINTS OF TYPE 'O' AND A PACKET OF CRISPS SOMETIME!"
..AND NOT ONLY THAT, BUT
UH... 'SCUSE ME.
PAH-TOO!!
DIG PROBE PICK
..AND NOT ONLY THAT, BUT THE WHITE CORPUSCLES TEND TO GET STUCK IN YA TEETH!!!
HEH HEH
I'M NOT SAYING THIS ISN'T A GOOD IDEA, MAX, BUT WELL
..DON'T YOU THINK THIS WIG WILL LOOK SORT OF SILLY??
DELROY, IN THIS BUSINESS YOU'VE GOT TO STRIKE WHILE THE IRON'S HOT, MARK MY WORDS
HAVE YOU SEEN MY SPECS ANYWHERE?
: SIGH : HERE THEY ARE
NO, DELROY, IT'S NO GOOD DITHERING IF YOU WANT TO MAKE A FORTUNE!!
GOT THE ORANGE BOX READY??
IT'S READY
OKAY NOW YOU GET THE WIG ON WHILE I SET THE TIMING DEVICE ON THE CAMERA.
THERE! NOW WASN'T IT A GREAT IDEA TO GO INTO THE SOUVENIR BUSINESS???
YEAH MAX
GREAT
KLICK!

Maxwell The Magic Cat © 1986-88 Alan Moore

Four MAXWELL THE MAGIC CAT strips by writer/*artist* Alan "Jill de Ray" Moore.

"In BATMAN it always works but old

No joke here, from Moore & Bollands' THE KILLING JOKE.

to that damned cave?

ALAN: That's it

MARTIN: *I remember in the article you wrote on comics scripting, you were talking about the SUPERMAN ANNUAL and getting (I think from you, Dave) a map of the Fortress of Solitude so that you knew where everything was.*

ALAN: Works perfectly.

DAVE: It's a strange thing as well, that a lot of writers find that having good reference helps them to write well. That's the thing — you actually get things that write and draw themselves because this is happening here, looking that way, so this is what you must see

STEVE: *Something like two-thirds of the action happens on that crossroads, so your reference is mostly ready-made. Once you've got that down pat and you've done your upteen camera angles at the end you get your last pen round the crossroads and then on that last page, a final visit where it's Borscht 'n' Burgers instead of Gunga Diner — a sort of symbolic East/West thing.*

DAVE: And doesn't it look a lonely newsstand then, with nobody about.

STEVE: *Well, it is just after Christmas, not many people working.*

ALAN: It's also just after half the city's been wiped out; perhaps you missed that

STEVE: *Yuh. I forgot that 'cause I was too busy reading the comic and getting upset about the characters.*

DAVE: Gee, where is everybody? Oh, it must be New Year!

STEVE: *Well, that's more or less what I thought, because it's very sudden, going from November 2nd to Christmas Day, to just after Christmas Day. The last thing you're thinking is New York was wiped out a month-and-a-half ago. You've just seen Dan and Laurie arrive at her mother's place and say "We're still around but it's*

Dan Dreiberg he assumes it'll work."

a secret," and then you get your minor denouement when you see Rorschach's diary and everything

MARTIN: *Well, Dan knows he's wanted for the fire rescue*

STEVE: *Is that it?*

MARTIN: *Well, I presumed that's the reason*

ALAN: He's still wanted for all sorts of shit — busting Rorschach out of prison for one thing.

FIONA: *He's not actually wanted for the fire, you can't actually arrest someone for saving lives.*

MARTIN: *What I mean is after that they know who he is.*

DAVE: But, as he says earlier on, he's got alternative identities.

MARTIN: *Yeah, he would do because he's a consummate comic book superhero.*

FIONA: *He's studied it, it's an art, isn't it?*

PETER: *But he's got the kit.*

STEVE: *Rather than Batman he's like Mr Terrific, isn't he?*

FIONA: *Well, he is Batman, isn't he?*

STEVE: *No, he's Mr Terrific, he's the bored millionaire who thinks "Ah, it'd be rather fun to be a superhero."*

PETER: *You forget he's got all those dumb 1950's Batman style costumes — he's got racks of them.*

MARTIN: *He's got his utility belt*

PETER: *The exoskeleton, the underwater suit .*

DAVE: He says, well, I've got my secret hide-out and I've got me Owl Ship, and I've got my utility belt and I've got me alternative costumes. Now what shall I do next? I know, a few more secret identities, just in case. .

FIONA: *That lovely bit where Laurie says "What's in the pouch, then?" and he lists some ridiculous things.*

MARTIN: *Scout knife, contraceptives. . .*

FIONA: *No no no, just the usual stuff, the smoke bombs, the pocket laser and so on.*

STEVE: *"Something genuinely useful, perhaps, Dan?"*

ALAN: And the exoskeleton where he says I tried it and it broke my arm. You know, in Batman it always works but old Dan Dreiberg he makes one and *assumes* it'll work.

STEVE: *I think that when Frank Miller did his second stay on Daredevil he established the superhero as the ultimate paranoid — like making Daredevil have a nervous breakdown basically.*

MARTIN: *Gives you good reasons for it, though.*

STEVE: *But, basically, he just couldn't trust anyone in the end so he went bananas. . .in a way that's the sort of nutcase who sets up secret identities and has a warehouse downtown out of which his Owlship can ascend.*

Brian Bolland gives us a gums-eye view.

DAVE: His is not paranoid — I think he's an obsessive hobbyist, he's a comics fan, a fanboy.

FIONA: *He's very, very down to earth, in many ways.*

DAVE: He's what you would be if you were a superhero, Steve

STEVE: *It's true, it's true. I've got the gut to prove it.*

ALAN: Well that's it. If I was going to be a hero, he's the one to identify with.

FIONA: *You'd do it sensibly, wouldn't you.*

ALAN: No, I probably wouldn't. If I was going to be a hero, the reason I'd want to be one is probably as a response to the comics I read as a kid, and I would feel that I had to have a utility belt.

DAVE: Yeah, I mean, you don't find a lot of fun in hanging around the dustbins in a shabby mack, which is what the real vigillante does all the time. You'd want the glitz. Well, that's what the fanboy or enthusiast version of a hero is

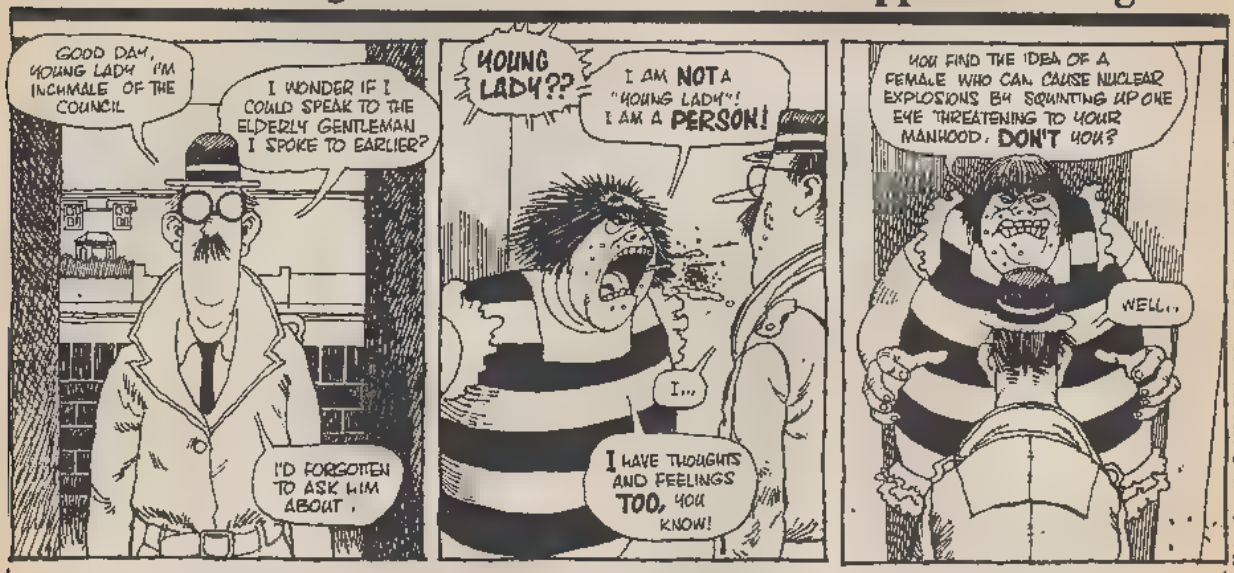
STEVE: *That's one of the clear statements that comes out of WATCHMEN The one person you get right inside of is Rorschach, and you realize that's it's not a nice world and he is not a nice person as a result of it, none of them are. They're all compromisers in one way or another.*

DAVE: That's right

FIONA: *They're all screwed up by being superheroes.*

STEVE: *They're all completely screwed up by the fact that normal people cannot*

"I think the thing that did me was when I stopped thinking of it


GOOD DAY, YOUNG LADY! I'M INCHMALE OF THE COUNCIL.
I WONDER IF I COULD SPEAK TO THE ELDERLY GENTLEMAN I SPOKE TO EARLIER?
I'D FORGOTTEN TO ASK HIM ABOUT.
YOUNG LADY??
I AM NOT A "YOUNG LADY"! I AM A PERSON!
I...
I HAVE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS TOO, YOU KNOW!
YOU FIND THE IDEA OF A FEMALE WHO CAN CAUSE NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS BY SQUINTING UP ONE EYE THREATENING TO YOUR MANHOOD. DON'T YOU?
WELL..

The Bojeffries Saga, by Alan Moore & Steve Parkhouse (from the UK's WARRIOR#12 magazine, August 1983).

be super unless they are physically super.

ALAN: And the ordinary people are screwed up by being ordinary as well.

STEVE: *Oh yes.*

ALAN: There's just different levels of being screwed up

FIONA: *The people who put on costumes to avoid the normal screw ups are taking on a whole new set.*

DAVE: Ah, Sir, so you want to be screwed up Don you want the ordinary, deluxe, or the super?

MARTIN: *About Nite Owl being a fanboy superhero. I've heard people say that WATCHMEN is a fanboy comic, that it comes from the old discussion that arises where the comic reader grows up he or she starts asking "Well, what if superheros were real?" and that's what you've done*

ALAN: What, you mean that because WATCHMEN upsets the traditions of superheroes then it's obvious that we're "into" those traditions?

MARTIN: *No, no, it's because it's the sort of thing that fans discuss — the sexuality of superheroes, that sort of thing.*

STEVE: *That whole thing of "Is the Vision 'endowed' or not?"*

ALAN: That could have been an accusation we'd have been open to if WATCHMEN had been solely about superheroes

MARTIN: *I'm not sure it's an accusation either, because both of you are old comics fans. You've taken the unrealistic conventions and thrown them off.*

ALAN: When we started off we wanted to do a really ace superhero comic, that was all

DAVE: And to touch all the bases and make the most of them that we could.

ALAN: We got into issue #1 and we started to realize. .I think it was when Dave suggested the nine panel grid and that element of formality crept in that we started to realize just what we could do I also realized that having Dave as an artist suddenly freed me. I could take advantage of all the subliminal possibilities of comics — I couldn't have done this with **Steve Bissette.** Steve is a wonderful artist but there isn't that degree of control and precision that Dave's got

DAVE: I think the thing that did me was when I stopped thinking of it as a superhero comic and started thinking of it as a Science Fiction comic

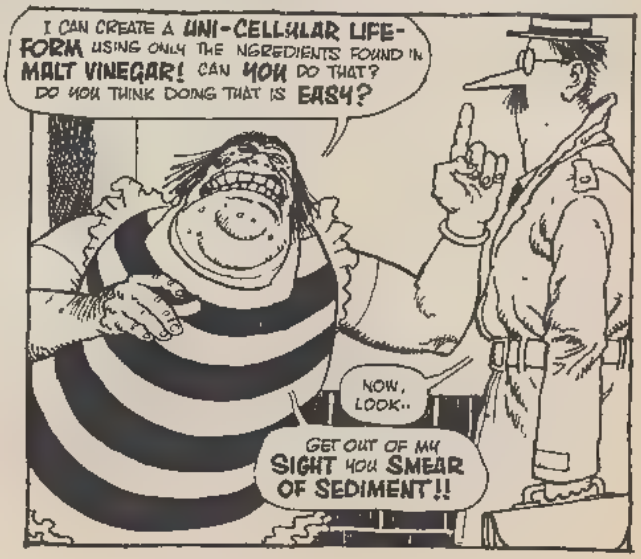
ALAN: Yeah, it suddenly comes

DAVE: That gave me a completely different outlook on it. It was a story based on hypothetical situations in which some of the characters effected the dress of others

MARTIN: *So you get the preconceptions inherent in the costume*

DAVE: Obviously, both Alan and I are very attracted by the glamour of superheroes. One of my favorite things that I ever did was the SUPERMAN ANNUAL — a fanboy's dream come true. It was a great story, it was Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Robin and it was edited by **Julie Schwartz,** and I think Alan probably felt this as well, having aspired to do that kind of comic for a long time. Having done it and got it out of your system, you think "Is that all there is?"

STEVE: *I think what's lovely is that it originates from the opportunity of DC buying all the Charlton heroes. You have a whole universe that hasn't really been taken advantage of, because Charlton*


I CAN CREATE A UNI-CELLULAR LIFE-FORM USING ONLY THE INGREDIENTS FOUND IN MALT VINEGAR! CAN YOU DO THAT? DO YOU THINK DOING THAT IS EASY?
NOW, LOOK..
GET OUT OF MY SIGHT YOU SMEAR OF SEDIMENT!!

The Bojeffries Saga is © 1983-88 by Moore & Parkhouse/Quality Communications

as a superhero comic and started thinking of it as a Sci-Fi comic."

lasted two years, maximum, under Giordano — I mean the real Charlton, not like Son of Vulcan

ALAN: Son of Vulcan *was* the real Charlton.

DAVE: To me, the real Charlton was **Ditko's** original Captain Atom in gold chainmail.

STEVE: *Yes, I agree, and now DC have decided to complete ignore that, and so there's something completely wonderful about the way you've transformed your original plan...*

DAVE: I think the thing about the Charlton heroes was that they were always second raters, quite honestly.

STEVE: *Self-professed.*

DAVE: And they were very derivative. What we found when we came to do them in WATCHMEN was "Hey, what we've got is the archetypal characters! We've got a niche for all our ideas and superheroes!" To my way of thinking, once they've been integrated into DC they're just another bunch of superheroes, who more or less duplicate a whole line of existing ones

STEVE: *They are DC's attempt to a New Universe, aren't they?*

DAVE: Well, I would call it a few new faces

STEVE: *...almost uniformly they smell — I mean, doing that to Captain Atom, doing that to Peacemaker. I mean writing Blue Beetle as Spider-Man meets Tony Stark.*

ALAN: The irony of it is, when they said we don't want you to do the Charlton characters it was because they could see what a radical interpretation we were going to put on them -- which would spoil them. I think that the problem that we have post WATCHMAN is that we now have a Peacemaker with a lot of facial hair, who's a really nasty sort of gung ho character. We've got The Question who is leading a fairly seedy existence in the world of real crime and horror. We've got Dr...uh ...Captain Atom, sorry, who is sort of all blue — I don't want this to come over as saying to all the writers of those series "You've ripped us off," but it's ironic. I don't think those characters would have been quite the same if it hadn't been for WATCHMEN

DAVE: The most blatant rip off I've seen of WATCHMEN is on the splash page of the latest SUPERPOWERS series #2. There's Darkseid in an alley, and at the end of the alley you can see the same scene that you see at the end of the alley in the Rorschach promo poster

ALAN: There's a Gunga Diner there?

DAVE: There's a Gunga Diner and the Crysler building, and there's the dome, and I take that as a great tribute

STEVE: *I must say, I remember seeing that cover of Blue Beetle where there's presidential posters all over saying "Heroes get stuffed!", there's Blue Beetle walking away, and it's very "Spider-Man No More," hunched shoulders, all that, and you think "What have you been reading?"*

I know what they've been reading! And ironically, these are the characters they are based on.

ALAN: Something that just flashed into my mind does WATCHMEN rely on superhero reference points? Is it a fanboy comic? Well, obviously to some degree our use of the superhero in that story comes from a couple of points: it was done for a medium that is superhero-dominated, and where people aren't really interested in proposals that aren't superhero orientated. That's obvious. The logical stuff

MARTIN: *...that people buying comics are only familiar with superhero stuff, and that's what they want*

ALAN: We'd got this situation, and originally we intended it to be a very superior superhero book, but by the time we were into it — issue #3, say — it became clear to us that we could have done it *without* superheroes. The elements that we started to play up then were ones that were nothing to do with superheroics. The superheroes become icons, symbols of power...

STEVE: *WATCHMEN grew organically, then?*

ALAN: Certainly

STEVE: *There were changes of direction?*

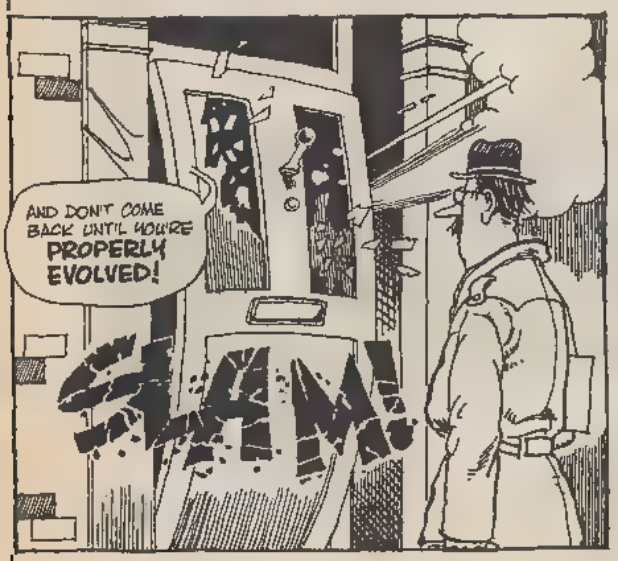
ALAN: Not many, not many. Once Issue #3 was in the bag we knew it all. I think there were a lot of elements of serendipity and that's a whole article in itself. This was the magic of WATCHMEN. In terms of what we felt we were doing, in that occasionally you'll be doing something and by accident you hit it right every time - that's a really wonderful feeling. With WATCHMEN all of these little coincidences started to creep in.

STEVE: *I remember you mentioning the same about V for Vendetta at one stage — you were talking about the V obsession about things that are 5 and V and all of a sudden that started influencing the strip.*

ALAN: WATCHMEN was very much the same.

DAVE: And once you start to impose a structure you get things that slot in.

STEVE: *I suspect this is probably the strength of WATCHMEN itself there's*



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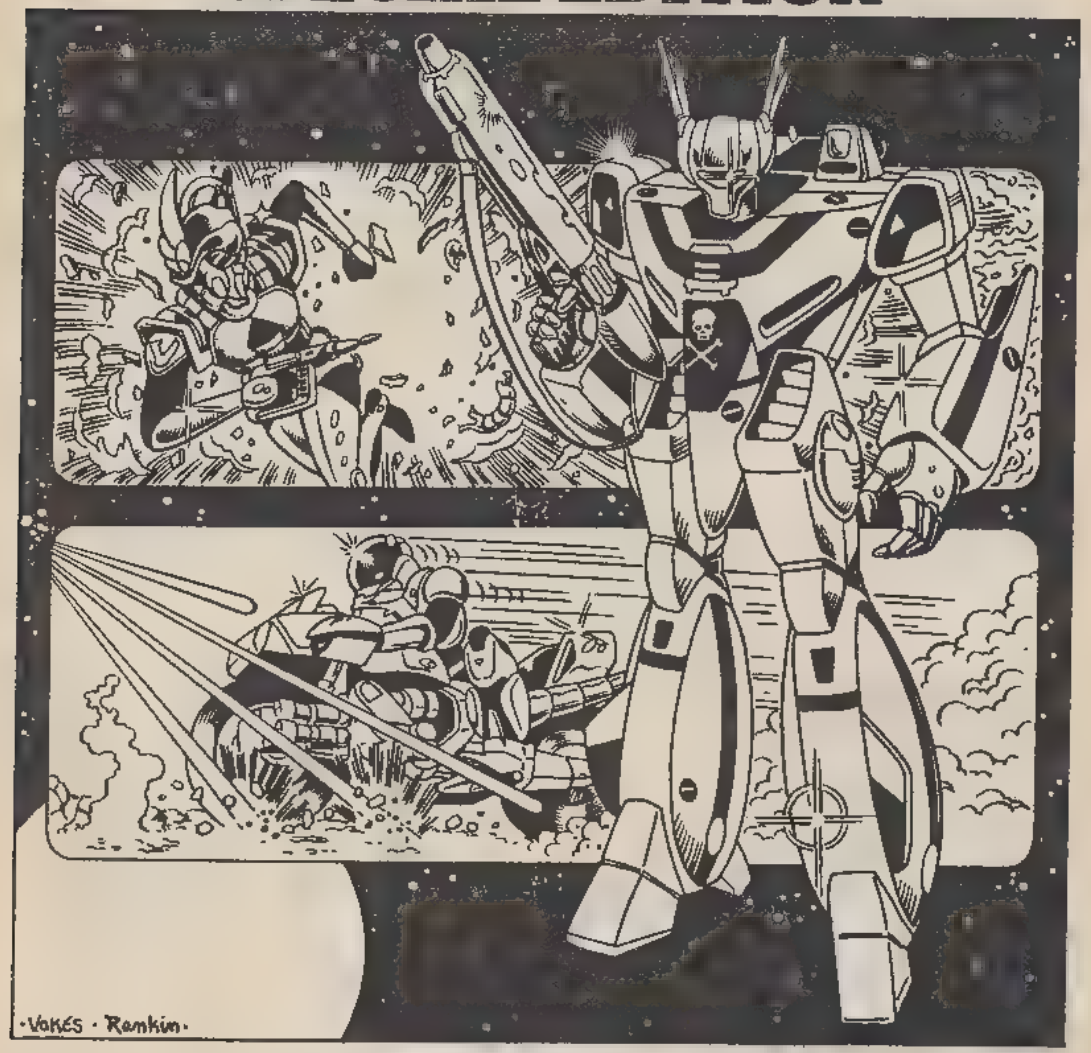

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COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION

"Dave said he'd found a reference shot of a crater as I described."

that symmetrical skeleton.

FIONA: *That formal concern with things.*

DAVE: The keyword is structure.

STEVE: *You can't quite say if you look at panel one — well, you can say if you look at panel the first and panel the last, that you've got the same thing, but there are some isolated examples. Here's an example in #11 where the first panel is a blank panel of snow, and if you look at the last page of #2 you've got a blank panel on the other side, which is the red of the funeral roses and you think that's really clever that.*

DAVE: That's serendipity. Until you said it, I didn't.

STEVE: *I don't believe you, David.*

DAVE: It's true, it's true!!

MARTIN: *I believe you.*

ALAN: There's more incredible things than that in there, the one that really stunned me — this was after issues of things that stunned me — was in #9. I found it very very difficult to believe that there's actually a crater up on Mars that's got a smiley face on it, but there is, and it's on the Argyre Planitia.

PETER: *That wasn't deliberate? Or did you just discover.*

STEVE: *You mean there really is one on Mars?*

ALAN: Yes.

MARTIN: *That's astonishing.*

FIONA: *Alan, are all the companies real that Adrian Veidt sets up?*

ALAN: No, they're not real companies.

MARTIN: *I thought you were about to say. .*

FIONA: *There is a Pyramid Deliveries...*

ALAN: Is there really, shit.

MARTIN: *I hope you were about to say...*

FIONA: *I didn't know. Like all the way through there have been these astonishing things, like the first time it happened was probably in #3 or #4 where — yeah, #4 — there's the scene where Dr Manhattan goes to Mars. Where's the panel where he's just walking. That one! My panel description for that was 'we're looking down upon a crater. Don't make it an EC crater. Let's have it a real flat, boring landscape.*

DAVE: 'Cause Mars is really boring.

ALAN: Looking down, a little blue man walking across a big pink crater, big pink sort of sand clouds. And what happened was Dave found a book on Mars and said that he'd found a reference shot of a crater that was exactly as I described. I said "Oh great". "And," he said, "the caption at the bottom says: "This is the so-and-so crater near the Nodus Gordii Mountains on Mars." I thought, I didn't know there were any Nodus Gordii Mountains on Mars" especially since we'd already set up, quite coincidentally, the Gordian Knot Lock Company.

45-record jacket cover from the musical group THE SINISTER DUCKS, of which Alan was a member (artwork by Kevin O'Neill).

The Sinister Ducks TM & © 1988 Alan Moore / Art © 1988 O'Neill

STEVE: *All part of your "Classical World" reference that you set up as a clue that it's Ozymandias behind it all.*

DAVE: And indeed it might even be that the motto on the side of the Gordian Knot van could serve as the epitaph for the whole series: "Let's see them undo this sucker."

FIONA: *I never noticed that.*

ALAN: I decided to call it the Gordian Knot Company. I thought, we've got a company here, let's give them a name, let's make it real; we'll call them the Gordian Knot Lock Company. They'll Never Untie This Sucker, etc. That'll be a good gag. Then suddenly when Dave mentioned these Nodus Gordii Mountains and I thought "This is more important than I thought, I'm being given a message here."

FIONA: *Extra-terrestrials or something.*

STEVE: *"Arthur Koestler is sending me messages from the spirit world."*

MARTIN: *Do you think it's possible that this universe, or galaxy, is the one that's created by Dr. Manhattan in WATCHMEN #12? It's got to be, hasn't it?*

ALAN: Who knows? But once we knew that there was something really important about the Gordian Knot, we thought "Well, this whole book is about somebody's response to the nuclear problem . ."

FIONA: *Which is a Gordian Knot.*

ALAN: Dave reminded me who it was who cut the Gordian Knot.

STEVE: *I wondered if you'd read those three Mary Renault books about Alexander.*

ALAN: No, I've not read them.

MARTIN: *You were buying one or two of them when I was last up here, Steve.*

STEVE: *Yes, well I bought them because I'm interested in mythology. I bought the Theseus trilogy bit by bit, and the bloke in the shop said "Yeah, there's one about Alexander; you can't get it all, though." And I thought "Hang on, he must have read that — that's where he's got all this..."*

DAVE: We know enough about Alexander to make the connection between the Gordian Knot.

FIONA: *So mutually you didn't think "We'll make him want to be Alexander*

"It was only when we suddenly found the historical model

The Great" That just came up as you were going along?

ALAN: Because it seemed obvious, once we'd got an Alexander connection, and Veidt and Alexander is the perfect connection

STEVE: *I remember in #2, you see the panel where the Comedian has set fire to the map, and it flicks back to the graveyard, and it's the end of Ozymandias' flashback. Captain Metropolis is saying "Somebody's got to save the world," and you get a poignant Ozymandias looking at the burnt map and you think, "That is him, that's the man who killed the Comedian." But I needed a motive, and maybe it's because you hadn't given him a motive at that stage...*

ALAN: He did have motive for doing it by then, but we hadn't got the Alexander connection.

STEVE: *So, like, sexual jealousy and Hooded Justice and all that had been established?*

ALAN: The thing with Veidt was we knew who he was, we knew what sort of person he was.

DAVE: Peter Cannon, Thunderbolt —

STEVE: *I can do it, I must do it, I will* do it

ALAN: We knew what he was going to do, and we knew his motivation for doing it: he's the cleverest man in the world. He doesn't want the world to die, or he *will* be the cleverest man on a cinder. It was only when we suddenly found the historical model that we realized this guy is really into **Alexander**! Why is this guy really into **Alexander**? Because he's the only person he *could* identify with. Picture **Julius Caeser** bursting into tears at the age of 32 . . "What's a matter, **Caeser?**" they ask, and he says, "By this age, **Alexander** ruled the world!" Those people, all of them, would identify with **Alexander** as the one who'd done it first.

STEVE: *But that whole connection with Rameses II and working that all out backwards from the poem, I gradually picked all that up — he's not quite literally and in a facile way modeling himself on Rameses II, because posterity has proved Rameses a failure*

FIONA: *That's what puzzled me. I was terribly terribly worried about this character because I thought "Why would this man who is the cleverest man in the world, called Ozymandias, when everyone knows the name from Shelley's poem — not from the connection with Rameses II I was worrying myself thinking out his reasons for naming himself after his antique failure*

STEVE: *Especially since it's probably the very first poem quoted in comics, that Roy Thomas AVENGERS (#57).*

DAVE: Well, of course, that's where Alan learnt English Literature. Even in itself that became serendipity, because in the piece of issue #10 where Dan penetrates the security of Ozymandias' computer — which was necessarily simplified

STEVE: *Yeeaah.*

DAVE: Lots of people said it would be a lot more complicated, well — yes, it would — but you've got to make it obvious for people. But it's the fact that that issue is called "Two Riders Were Approaching" and it's Rameses II. If you put the two figures on the end of it that is the rider, the rider that it's necessary to do.

ALAN: Oh, there's a lot of clever stuff like that.

DAVE: We've been through the bit about the coincidence of issue #5 there's the scene where the aging hippy has killed his children because the doesn't want them to find out about nuclear war

STEVE: *Terrifying stuff*

DAVE: Yeah, and Alan suggested that he had some old '60s decor and posters, and I thought, well he needs a **Grateful Dead** poster because —

ALAN: — They're dead.

DAVE: And they should be grateful. Sod, I got my copy of "The Album Cover Album" and I looked up **Grateful Dead.**

FIONA: *You mean you haven't got the records!*

DAVE: I certainly haven't. I've got a lot of Stax and I've got a lot of Motown

ALAN: I haven't even got one of their albums.

DAVE: It's an album, the particular reference they've got, called "Aoxomoxoa," which is a symmetrical word

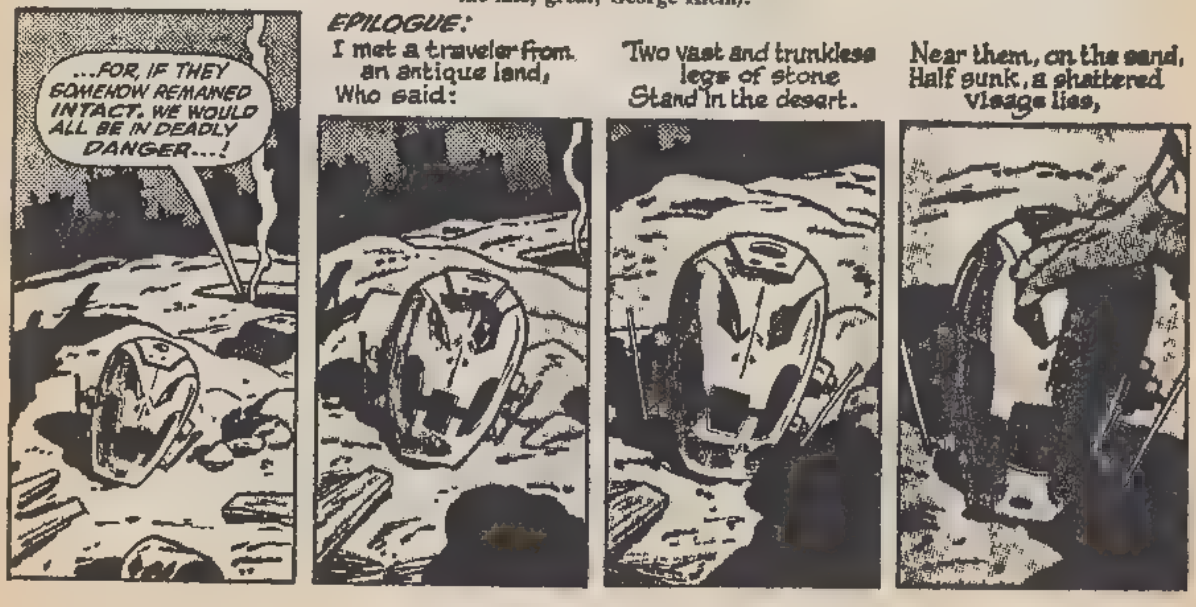
STEVE: *A palindrome.*

ALAN: A symmetrical picture which has got a skull and cross bones like the pirate flag

STEVE: *Has it got the pyramid and the eye?*

DAVE: No, but it's got hands with eggs, at the beginning of the book Rorschach breaks an egg. On the opposite page there's another album cover, also by **Rick**

"Probably the very first poem quoted in comics." From AVENGERS#57 (story: Roy Thomas, artwork: John Buscema and the late, great, George Klein).


...FOR, IF THEY SOMEHOW REMAINED INTACT, WE WOULD ALL BE IN DEADLY DANGER...!
EPILOGUE:
I met a traveler from an antique land, Who said:
Two vast and trunkless legs of stone Stand in the desart.
Near them, on the sand, Half sunk, a shattered visage lies,

that we realized this guy is really into ALEXANDER! Why?"

Griffin, TALES OF THE RUM RUNNERS, which is the club in #5, and that's the reason why there's a skull and a cross bones But as far as the smiley face on Mars is concerned — I thought I'd bet ter get some more reference because what I wanted to do was to make it real Mars. All that Mars really is a selection of infinitely graded rubble ranging from sand up to boulders as big as the Queen Mary So I got this book out — and you can get it out of your local library — called THE TRAVELLERS' GUIDE TO THE SOLAR SYSTEM.

STEVE: *It's really beautiful, that book.*

DAVE: And in there there is a NASA photograph of a smiley face on Mars

ALAN: When we saw that we thought, "Christ, this is where Jon is, this is where Laurie's going to be in #9 " We nearly didn't use it because we thought nobody would believe it they'll think this is a really stupid contrivance.

DAVE: Then, of course, it occurs to me — perhaps because my brain is getting loosened to the point where I can make these connections — that in fact that smiley face is the result of a cosmic coincidence. That was formed by two meteorites hitting it almost exactly at the same point In other words, there was a crater there with a wall and another meteorite of almost the same size demolished almost all of the crater with a small remnant of the old one, with the two meteorites lying side by side, which makes the smiley face.

Some day Alan and I are going to visit it

ALAN: And we were thinking about Jon's citadel being pink, so if it crashes near one of the boulders then the rubble will fall in a pink spray across the left eye of the face Half way through, Kate noticed the plugs on the spark hydrant — she said "Do you know that was a smiley face?" And Dave had drawn it about 30 times by then, and it wasn't until the last issue that he managed to make it obvious

DAVE: Unfortunately a bit of red covers it up.

STEVE: *Oh yeah.*

ALAN: But they've been on there since issue #3, those plugs

DAVE: As I think of it, after the death of Rorschach, looking into the tunnel there is another smiley face with a bloodstain. It's the kind of thing I've tried not to contrive too much, but like Alan was saying earlier it's like striking a series of chords

STEVE: *In #6, Rorschach walks into the kidnappers hide-out, and the feeling you're getting from the writing — we're talking about the hairs on the back of his neck standing up from the atmosphere, and there's things like this boiler which as got a face on it, and this cushion that's got a horrible ripped face on it, and stuff like that...I just can't be certain that you didn't draw it deliberately.*

DAVE: I'm *almost* certain that I didn't.

STEVE: *Have a look, all the cushions seem to be pulling faces*

DAVE: And that's a Cyclopean face, that's like the bastard at the end

MARTIN: *Ha ha ha! This is ridiculous*

STEVE: *Well, all the cushions have got faces It's real paranoia, I love that.*

DAVE: Well, there are some conscious bits in it, but that I must say in all humility was a --

ALAN: Happenstance

FIONA: *Total fluke*

STEVE: *Well, maybe I spotted it because I follow Nexus, because they've got lots of people with one eye.*

PETER: *I assume this one was deliberate, the splashed Buddah, and it also relates to the end when Moloch gets shot in the forehead - he's got that little Buddah beauty mole, just as Rorschach says "Can you provide any illumination" and you suddenly see him with the red light of the sign flashing on behind him so you've got the illumination and you've got the little mark of the Buddah on his forehead.. only it's a bullet hole. There are just so many of these things it becomes completely meaningless like real life*

DAVE: You begin to wonder, I mean we used to have these extensive phone calls and discuss the latest set of coincidences and we began to think: Are we just imagining all these coincidences?

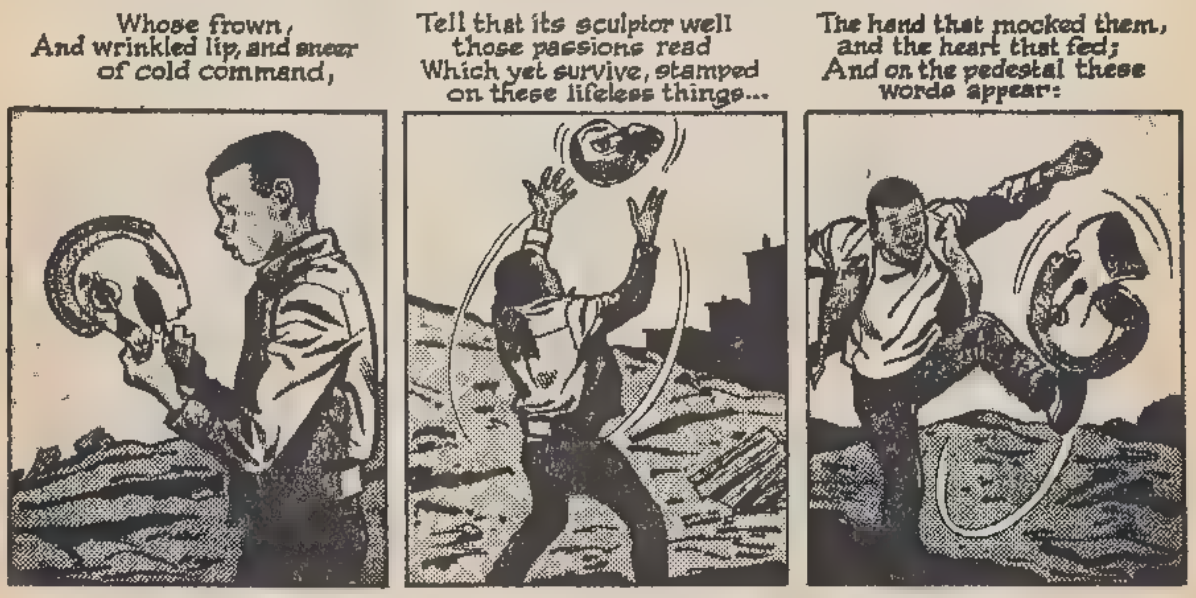
PETER: *He's real Illuminati stuff*

DAVE: Yeah, and the eye and the pyramid — that's part of Veidt's costume.

MARTIN: *Talking about coincidences and apparent contrivances, one thing I found a bit awkward about #12 — losing a couple of days for Jon and Laurie when they arrive that seems like a contrivance.*

ALAN: Um — no there is no telling how long Jon and Laurie are upon Mars If you work it out from their dialogue they might have been there half an hour, on the other hand they've been all the way around the planet.

MARTIN: *It seemed to me it might have*



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"Kids, don't try this at home. Not without parental permission."

been several hours.

ALAN: The thing that struck me is — I suppose it is a contrivance that they ended up at that street corner at that time, but it's no more a contrivance than those other people ending up there I mean, we've already got the thing about the tachyons.

STEVE: *This seems a bit convenient, though, like "comic-bookese," with tachyons going back in time.*

MARTIN: *They do, they do, that's scientific fact*

ALAN: It's like all those bastards talking about the Free Lunch Drive at the end of HALO JONES, that was a bit of a contrivance, wasn't it? Well, there actually is a current scientific theory which says that the entire universe was created from nothing more than the interaction of subatomic particles. I read up on this stuff, you know. The thing with the tachyons...if I was Adrian Veidt and I actually wanted some sort of defense against Dr. Manhattan, what would I do? Obviously, the big advantage he's got over anyone else is that he knows what's going to happen. Is there any way of fucking that up for him? So you research Quantum Physics and there are particles that go back in time: tachyons. And all particles contain coded information, so if you wanted to jam someone who had that degree of prescience...

STEVE: *It's more subjective prescience, isn't it? He can only see into the future that...*

ALAN: .. he's in, yeah So that would screw up everything for him When he and Laurie left Mars they might have ended up on Earth a month before they left or 10 years later. He just got lost.

DAVE: In one of the possible alternative Watchmens we did discuss this briefly. Since teleportation makes Laurie sick they might actually have caught a ride back to Earth or caught a large meteorite to physically traverse the distance to Earth and then step off. It actually fits in with "Two Riders Were Approaching," but in the end we decided it didn't work. It was better to have them arrive at that street corner, like, by fate, just like all those other people. It's not terribly significant for the story that they arrive there.

STEVE: *Just this mad compulsion (of Laurie's) to put things in her carrier bag*

ALAN: Just a gun

STEVE: *There's quite a lot of stuff in that carrier bag, isn't there?*

ALAN: No, she only puts in the gun. She's...how are they going to protect themselves in a world where this can happen? She bumps into something, looks down and ..

STEVE: *She's thinking "I'm the daughter of the Comedian."*

DAVE: Suppose you've just had a round trip to Mars, you've been to a pink castle, you then save the world by your ability to reason, and then you come back to Earth and it's utter carnage, what would you do?

ALAN: And you only see her do that in the background. You see her looking at the gun, Jon's talking in the foreground, she's bending down, picking something up and you can't see what it is and put it into her bag. It's only the gun she puts into her bag, that's all

MARTIN: *Another thing I found something of a contrivance is, well, Adrian Veidt is a perfect physical specimen and all, but...him catching a bullet?*

ALAN: I believe it's possible

STEVE: *I believe that's Thunderbolt.*

ALAN: That thing about catching the bullet...we do nothing there that we haven't done in #5 I mean we see it in slow motion, and he's picking up the ashtray while the other guy is pointing a gun at him and while bringing it up to hit the guy makes sure it converges to the ex act point where the bullet is going to hit him And he does all this in two seconds

MARTIN: *I suppose we're used to seeing Batman do that kind of thing — blocking a bullet with an ashtray*

DAVE: Veidt catches it in #12 and he's glad because it's like a party trick that came off, and the fact of the matter is he's wearing metallic armor anyway, so if he hadn't caught it ..

FIONA: *He's showing off.*

MARTIN: *I can't remember what it's called, but there's a standard move in Oriental martial arts when an arrow is shot at your chest, instead of taking it in the chest you put up your arm, sacrifice an arm. He puts his hands up like that, so there's a safety valve there even if that doesn't work.*

ALAN: I believe it is possible. I wouldn't want to try it, but I believe it's possible if you are a perfect physical specimen whose mind and body are totally one, it's just possible

STEVE: *What about the amount of blood one blood blister in the palm can produce*

FIONA: *The hands do have a dense net of blood vessels. Also your hands bleed*

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"My name is Ozymandias,
King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye
Mighty, and despair!"

Nothing beside remains.
Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck,
Boundless and bare

The lone and level sands
stretch far away.

"It's like all those bastards talking about the Free Lunch Drive

incredibly quickly.

STEVE: *I know. Cutting the end off a finger, it's like a water pistol.*

ALAN: And a moving bullet is extremely hot, so it would probably burn the tissue.

STEVE: *That's what I thought, a moving bullet, blood blister, BANG, you know.*

ALAN: Kids, don't try this at home. Not without parental permission.

FIONA: *I notice there wasn't a parental warning on the front of the comic.*

MARTIN: *Like all those people trying to fly.*

STEVE: *Don't jump out of the window like Rorschach did 'cause you won't just break your ankle.*

ALAN: Don't try to teleport yourself to Mars.

FIONA: *Don't hide in the fridge*

STEVE: *Are people going to be found dead in fridges because of WATCHMEN*

FIONA: *"I can't wait to surprise my mum," yeah.*

DAVE: You know, when Rorschach appears out of that fridge...

STEVE: *It is one of the most supremely timed pieces.*

Steve Ditko's Spider-Man, circa 1964.

ALAN: It's also so.. so mental. We thought "We got to have Rorschach make an entrance, what would be an incredibly stupid thing to do?"

STEVE: *Only Rorschach is mad enough to wait in a fridge on the off-chance that this man's coming back that evening.*

ALAN: But Rorschach has followed him a certain part of the way, you can see that: the "The End of the World..." man follows him down the street. Anyway, that's the sort of thing Rorschach would do. He doesn't think about dying in the fridge, it's just a great way to make an entrance, frighten the shit out of people.

STEVE: *Especially with Moloch, he has no compunction about screwing the hell out of him.*

MARTIN: *I was sitting next to you, Dave, at last year's Comic Con, and you were chatting with Frank Miller about panel grids — with DARK KNIGHT coming out at sixteen panels per page, rather than your nine, but using the same basic principles of regular page layouts. You've both come on to it completely independently and realized it had certain advantages.*

DAVE: It does put a very strict graphic control on the page

ALAN: It's interesting that the most experimental work in mainstream comics is being done from a very static standpoint, whereas in the '60s. .

FIONA: *Jack Kirby double page spreads, collages...*

ALAN: We've calmed down, we've tried decaffeinated coffee.

STEVE: *You actually needed that skeleton to hand the whole series onto, didn't you. The nine panel Ditko-esque grid is very reminiscent of action scenes in early SPIDER-MANs, BLUE BEETLE, etc.*

DAVE: Oh sure, I've brought out my early **Ditko** issues of SPIDER MAN and that's the closest previous thing to WATCHMEN

STEVE: *Kirby was never particularly interested in things like the nine panel layout.*

DAVE: What it actually does — and I have no idea if **Ditko** consciously did this, although people always thought SPIDER MAN was a very involved kind of comic — is that the regular tempo or look of the book makes you go into the story, it makes you forget about the page and go straight

FIONA: *And any alteration in the tempo like the first page of #12 is so much more stimulating because it is so different.*

MARTIN: *If you change everything at once, people will think "What's going on?" But if you stick to the formal nine*

SINCE A FIENDISH FATE HAS TRAPPED ME HERE ... WITH A HOSTILE RACE IN A NIGHTMARE WORLD!
NO LONGER WILL I RESIST THIS EARTHLY MADNESS! NO LONGER MINE A LONELY VOICE PLEADING PEACE IN A WORLD OF STRIFE!
FROM THIS TIME FORTH THE SILVER SURFER WILL BATTLE THEM ON THE PLANET'S OWN SAVAGE TERMS!
I'LL FORGET MY HERITAGE - BLOT OUT MY SPACE-BORN ETHIC...
LET MANKIND BEWARE! FROM THIS TIME FORTH... THE SURFER WILL BE THE DEADLIEST ONE OF ALL!
© 1966 M.E.C., Inc.

Jack Kirby... a creator, first!

The last page to SILVER SURFER #18 (1st run). Story & art by Lee/Kirby.

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at the end of HALO JONES, that was a bit of a contrivance."

panel grid

DAVE: And I think it also helps in the writing if there are not captions, nothing artificial, so that you get the idea "This isn't being written, this isn't being drawn, this is happening," and the more attention you draw to the graphic aspects of the page, the less you get involved in the actual story content.

Now we have comics in all kinds of sizes, all kinds of formats, one of the dreariest thoughts is that everyone in the next few years is going to be drawing in a nine panel grid.

MARTIN: *Or sixteen panels. That's another thing I wanted to mention, the influence WATCHMEN will have. Because you've already had a certain influence on comics, particularly Alan. And WATCHMEN has had a lot of attention, selling very well, what do you think is going to happen now?*

ALAN: I think it's not too presumptuous to talk about post-WATCHMEN comics — think of superhero group books...

DAVE: ...Just look at JUSTICE LEAGUE #1, if that isn't a WATCHMEN .

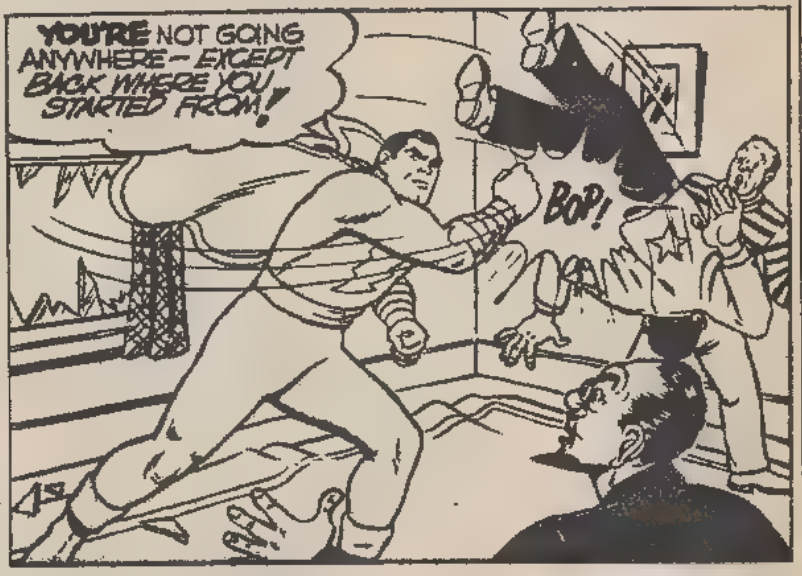
ALAN: It's a very good book. I don't know if it would have happened in quite the same way without WATCHMEN and MIRACLE MAN and.

STEVE: *It's certainly a splendid book, I don't know why it's a splendid book, since the two people working on it are two of the people I respect least in the industry at the moment*

ALAN: I think there will be post-WATCHMEN comics, probably some good ones, like the thing from Dark Horse, THE AMERICAN: a superhero who has been a patriotic symbol for the government since the '40s, but there's something very strange about the way he works: he keeps getting killed, or reported killed, and then he turns up again and calls a press conference. It's a beautiful strip and it's got that WATCHMEN flavor. I will say this. I'll bet my arse that within six months or a year, everyone will be sick to the back teeth of realistic superheroes.

DAVE: It does seem to be "de rigeur" that superheroes are gloomy and introspective. You get something like CAPTAIN MARVEL, which to me is the ultimate Good Fun superhero DC revive it and it's gloomy, miserable, inappropriate...I'd like to do a Captain Marvel who would be an adventurous, colorful, magical character

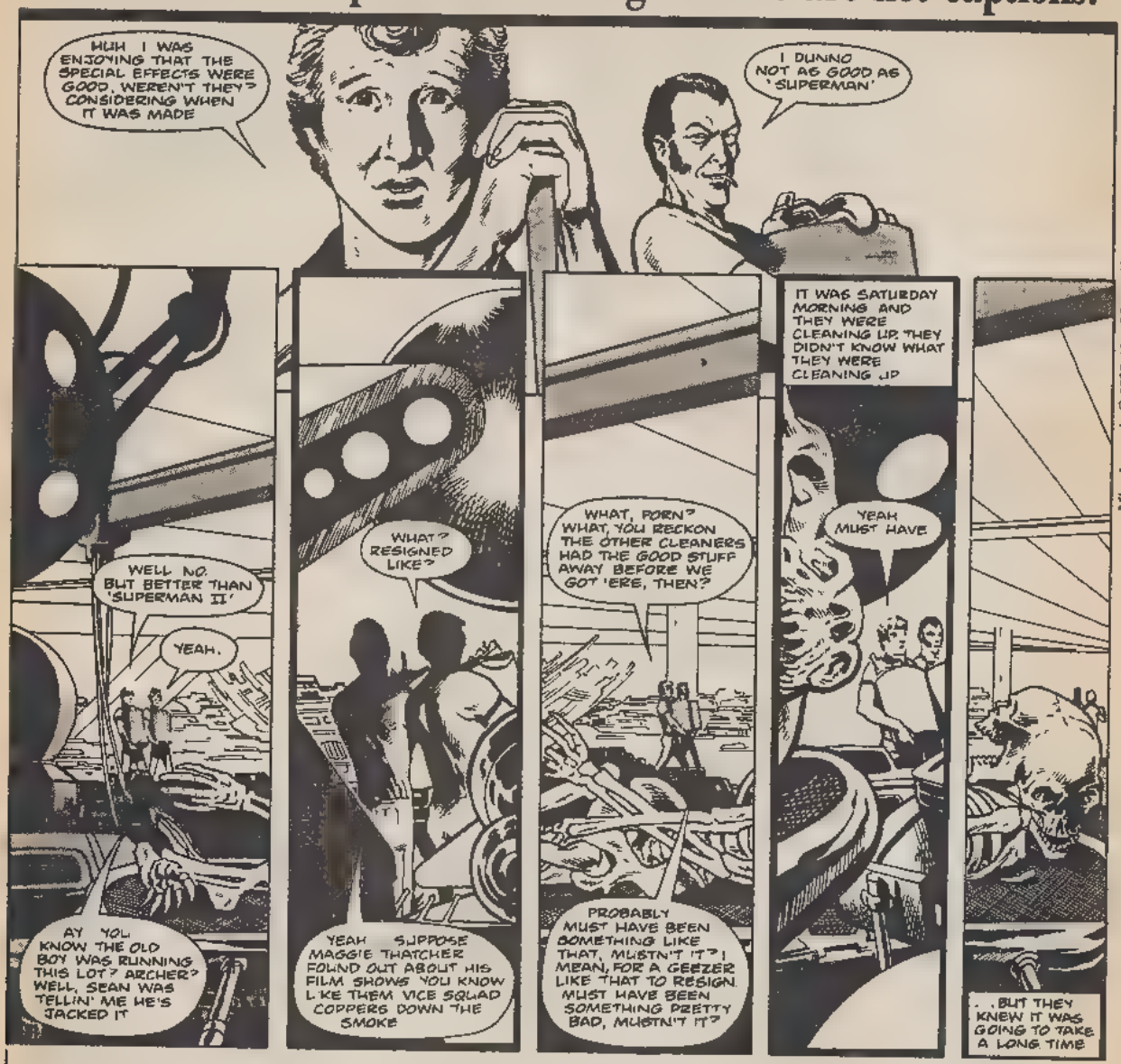
STEVE: *I'd like you to do CAPTAIN MARVEL! The thing that strikes me about your style of WATCHMEN is it's not the Neal Adams, ultra-realistic, "Let's make the cross-hatching even finer than it was before" approach. It's the Steve Ditko school, the Wally Wood school that takes the world and interprets it in your style You reinvent reality and because you reinvent all, or most, of it, the illusion of reality is reinforced. It's all down to the person who's reading it now it's suspension of disbelief and with no clever little photographic tricks and the like — it isn't full of Bill Sienkiewicz's tricks.. With Sienkiewicz you're very aware of whatever medium he's using for however many panels.. but quite often there are little*



Dave Gibbons: somewhere between the simplistic, cartoon style of C.C. Bech...

... and the ultra-realistic style of Neal Adams. Illustrations: Captain Marvel/Shazam (Beck) and Ben Casey (Adams).

"I think it also helps in the writing if there are not captions."


HUH I WAS ENJOYING THAT THE SPECIAL EFFECTS WERE GOOD, WEREN'T THEY? CONSIDERING WHEN IT WAS MADE
I DUNNO NOT AS GOOD AS 'SUPERMAN'
WELL NO. BUT BETTER THAN 'SUPERMAN II'
YEAH.
AY YOU KNOW THE OLD BOY WAS RUNNING THIS LOT? ARCHER? WELL, SEAN WAS TELLIN' ME HE'S JACKED IT
WHAT? RESIGNED LIKE?
YEAH SUPPOSE MAGGIE THATCHER FOUND OUT ABOUT HIS FILM SHOWS YOU KNOW L'KE THEM VICE SQUAD COPPERS DOWN THE SMOKE
WHAT, PORN? WHAT, YOU RECKON THE OTHER CLEANERS HAD THE GOOD STUFF AWAY BEFORE WE GOT 'ERE, THEN?
PROBABLY MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING LIKE THAT, MUSTN'T IT? I MEAN, FOR A GEEZER LIKE THAT TO RESIGN MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING PRETTY BAD, MUSTN'T IT?
IT WAS SATURDAY MORNING AND THEY WERE CLEANING UP. THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THEY WERE CLEANING UP
YEAH MUST HAVE
. . BUT THEY KNEW IT WAS GOING TO TAKE A LONG TIME

Miracleman is © 1988 Alan Moore/Alan Davis/Quality Communications

The epilogue from MARVELMAN SPECIAL#1 (Moore & Davis), 1984.

realistic highlights that refer to photography. With you stuff, Dave, we know where we are – you don't go beyond a certain gap in the feathering, your line quality is strictly limited. It all looks like it's drawn by the same person.

DAVE: I think it's a question of translating reality into a code. . . and you get that code as expressive as you can. No matter what anybody does it's still lines on a piece of paper — the ultimate paradox of drawing, anyway, is that nothing in reality has got a line around it. When you draw an outline you are saying straight away "This is not real, this is my view."

STEVE: *Nothing in reality is two dimensional, is it?*

DAVE: As far as being an artist — I've never wanted to be an "artist." I just want to tell stories with pictures and so I want to draw to the level where I can put my thoughts about stories, about dramatic situation into a sort of shorthand. A code that will strike a consistently responsive chord in the viewer and that's as far as the drawing itself concerns me.

I'm much more involved in the mood than the actual physical means of conveying it.

MARTIN: *That's what makes a comic artist.*

STEVE: *Presumably this gives you a guide to where you place the text and the dialogue, Alan. Or does it work in a straight "I write it, you draw it," type way.*

MARTIN: *Another thing that clearly differs from the other comics is that you knew just what you were going to get there. It wasn't like when you were writing SWAMP THING — with different artists all the time - here you knew exactly what you'd get. . .*

ALAN: Well, if you look at my rough, scribbled page layouts that I do for my own satisfaction, I think you'd be able to draw a very straight line between them and Dave's thumbnails, his pencils and his inks. Obviously, the realization of a lot of the scenes exceeded my expectations since I couldn't imagine them with that degree of clarity but it was still pretty much what we planned to put there. Having a nine panel grid structure gave me. . instead of what, with **Steve Bissette** and **John Totleben,** is a matter of leaving whole pages to them. with WAT-

"It's a question of translating reality into a code..."

CHMEN I knew which were the double-sized panels so I could actually give Dave a composition that actually worked well with a double-sized panel I knew the layout of each page exactly.

STEVE: *So you knew exactly where a caption, word balloon, etc., would appear?*

MARTIN: *You've got your own rhythm as well.*

ALAN: Yeah well, for example, in #5 you may have noticed that the symmetry extends to the page layouts

STEVE: *The central plash on page 14 and 15...the first and last panels the whole issue's layouts are mirrored down that fold in page 14/15 — like a Rorschach ink blot And in #9 you get this tremendous bit of timing — and it's not often you can praise timing in comics — but it's obvious that you know where Dave's layouts are going to.*

ALAN: Not precisely where it was going to be ..

STEVE: *But this works so well where he's talking about chaotic terrain. .that great yawning gap and the feeling of the huge scale of the canyon they're flying over, which — because there's no speech until the return to the coda at the bottom of the page times your feeling that important emptiness there perfectly If I were writing WATCHMEN I would've titled the chapter that. Chaotic Terrain.*

DAVE: There you go — another phrase thrown up by a reference book

ALAN: I always know which is going to be the last word balloon in the panel, obviously and I knew that was gonna be a big panel and so I used the impact of a small cluster of words in a big space to get that chime there.

DAVE: One of the worst banes of a comic artist is working with a writer who doesn't think through what he's asking you to draw. Alan thinks his content through always very carefully, whether they're on a nine panel grid or not. When you get a script you're in no doubt as to what he's got in mind. Some people have said to me "Isn't that a bit restrictive having Alan describe all this stuff and its nine panels per page " Well, it isn't really I find it immensely rewarding

MARTIN: *I've heard artists say they just couldn't work with him.*

STEVE: *It must be a challenge to a craftsman, I would've thought*

DAVE: The only thing that matters to me about doing a comic strip — and I imagine it's the same for Alan — is that as it *is* a collaboration, for it to be a good one you've got to forget your ego and if a thing's gonna work for the good of the book — do it, even if it isn't to your taste. I know Alan's made compromises and I have as well I don't mind having a tight script for that reason.

ALAN: It's like when we didn't know what to do for the cover or #11 and we thought "Know it opens with snow, know it ends with a flash" and I suddenly thought Whiteness. And then Dave said "What if we do the entire cover white?"

"Brilliant that's what it's going to be, no one's ever done a completely white cover before — someone's gotta do it, it might as well be us." Then Dave got sort of

DAVE: Well, I didn't think they'd let us do it, so I spoke to **Jenette Kahn** and I

Before & after: Steve Bissette's original pencils on the left, with the finished product on the right (re-drawing & inking by John Totleben).

"I always know which is going to be

spoke to **Dick Giordano** as well, and they said "We don't like it particularly — we don't think it'll make any difference to the sales so if you *want* to do it. "But what I then felt was that now we'd been given the freedom of the shop .. I didn't then think it was the best cover — I'm still a *bit* ambivalent about it.

ALAN: At the time we were discussing this I said, "I'm really into just the concept of a white cover — it's so pure," and Dave was saying "Yeah, but a little element of color would emphasize the whiteness," so Dave suggested just the butterfly laying in the snow

STEVE: *You don't mean a completely white, I presume there'd still be a logo...*

DAVE: The original idea for the cover was to have a butterfly in the snow but it wasn't possible to construct the story that way

MARTIN: *I think what you got came out as a very attractive cover.*

FIONA: *It's a brilliant idea*

STEVE: *Yes, that really is very, very strong linking the drip of the vivarium with the kid and the newsvendor...*

DAVE: Well that didn't happen until I came to draw the last page and I thought "Yeah, I can manipulate that to work that way."

ALAN: I mean, I didn't say in the script make the newsvendor and the kid into the droplet but when Dave was drawing it ..I didn't know that would be possible until then There were some things I asked Dave to do "if it were possible."

STEVE: *What about the "tunnel" through the comic in #3?*

DAVE: That was specified in the script.

ALAN: There were some things we put in Watchmen where we thought. that'll be cool when the readers notice it

FIONA: *If they do...*

DAVE: But, as you say, that is what gives me satisfaction from a craftsmanship level because you really do have to be able to draw things in three dimensions to be able

the last word balloon in the panel."

to do that

STEVE: *That's what I meant about the sequences in #11 when you see time jump back a little each time so that you see someone get across the road then you see them start to cross. You realize that what you're experiencing are filmic comics, camera angles. I can imagine Alan's script for these pages, and they'll read like a film script complete with camera angles and frames. .I know there's more too it than that...*

ALAN: You're near enough, Steve.

STEVE: *But the thrill is that the process is that naked to the reader It's like reading a novel and realizing you know how it's been written — something that doesn't happen very often. You're constantly reminded that this is put together by two people unlike a novel*

PETER: *One thing I liked was the look of the alternative reality — the fact that you've got this.. DAN DARE vision of 1986, with electric cars and airships and the rest but it still looks like modern streets and grubby reality.*

FIONA: *Wonderful touches like Dr. Manhattan appearing on television in an old-fashioned, double-breasted suit and suddenly you notice that everybody wears double-breasted suits*

DAVE: Well, Alan's forte was the sociological and philosophical ramifications whereas I really enjoyed exploiting the technological and stylistic elements I think a very early note of mine suggested that, to make things look a bit different, why not double-breasted suits?

FIONA: *That's dodging the usual problem with futuristic societies where they all just got put into mini-skirts, plastic dresses etc*

MARTIN: *What they do is, if they don't take the shiny, metallic uniform things then they take the most "modern" bit of subculture fashion like, say, punk...*

FIONA: *And give everyone a Mohican.*

DAVE: We didn't try to make it ultra modern or futuristic

FIONA: *Yes, because it's only really two years back in our time.*

PETER: *One of the touches I liked was the top-knot thing which was simultaneously like something out of a 1950s Philip K. Dick novel and it's the kind of thing you can see out in the street just by looking out've the window*

DAVE: Strangely enough, people have said that it's quite an Un-American thing you know, gangs of people, identified by the style of their clothes.

ALAN: One of the things I was most pleased with with relation of the knot-tops was when we finally see Aline...and she

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Dr. Strange & Eternity from MARVEL FANFARE #41, artwork by Dave Gibbons.

is, like, a **Zandra Rhodes** knot-top. You can see that the style has started to filter out into the general public.

DAVE: And when you see Laurie, at the end, she's got those little bootees on — like you see Aline wearing. Only Aline's are black leather whereas Laurie's are sort-of pastelly...

FIONA: *Kitsch.*

MARTIN: *This is astonishing all this — the way it's so coherent.*

DAVE: When DC said to us supposing we get some other people to continue WATCHMEN.

FIONA: *How the hell do you continue it?*

ALAN: We stopped them from doing it

DAVE: But what I'm trying to say is — I really believe that Alan and I doing it is intrinsic to its success. Watchmen is really hard work — I know we're sitting here smiling now but it's not just been arbitrary, it's not just drawing or writing whatever comes into your head.

FIONA: *I was talking to somebody at the mart about WATCHMEN and asked them what they thought of #12. They said: it went off exactly as I expected it to — not much happened. Well, of course not that much happened, it's not meant to be a bloodbath...it seems to me that you've got this lovely, ironic ending and although the whole end isn't there the conclusions are all mapped out for you — you know what's going to happen in 20 or 30 years.*

DAVE: The sort of idea DC had was to have a Nite Owl/Rorschach team and show more of the Comedian in Vietnam.

FIONA: *What, a sort of "Randall and Hopkirk, Deceased?"*

DAVE: Yeah! And as THE 'NAM is going down really big they were thinking seriously about a Comedian war comic

ALAN: Can I take up this thing about "not much happened" which is a criticism which I'm not very used to There's a review in AMAZING HEROES by **Gerald Jones**, who is a very good reviewer, and he says. well, we've got to #5 and not much has happened. Of course, looking at it in terms of conventional comics there's only been about two weeks passed and a few incidents. what he forgot was that in those five issues we've more-or-less covered an entire 40 years

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"There were some things I asked Dave to do 'if it were possible.'"

continuity so it has been covered in flashback

MARTIN: *But where were the* fight *scenes?*

ALAN: OK, so not much goes on in WATCHMEN #12. .compared to what? — a major character dies, half of New York has been wiped out, Dr Manhattan leaves Earth forever

FIONA: *It's like in #11 you have the superhero battle and it's with a fork and a dinner plate.. and that's* it.

PETER: *I found WATCHMEN #12 really satisfying because it did bring all the threads together #11 I found really breathless because you were getting through so much in that one issue but #12 was everything I couldn't hoped it would be*

ALAN: Once you step outside a comic-books' frame of reference you realize that no matter how much action you put in a comic — unless it's labeled "action" in the way that all comic action usually is — people will just not notice it

STEVE: *All violence does for a comic legitimately, in my opinion, is to speed up the tempo.*

MARTIN: *The Kirby stuff: all these people being smashed through walls and being hit for miles — you just take no notice these days. However ..*

ALAN: The finger-breaking scene in the first issue

MARTIN: *Exactly what I was going to mention*

ALAN: In that scene we gave the key to the way we were going to approach violence in WATCHMEN — you just think of any fight between the Batman and the Joker when they're all going at it for five pages there must be at least, logically, a couple of fingers broken.

MARTIN: *I've been punched in the face — once in my whole life. . .and it hurt for* days

DAVE: I went and punched a friend of mine on the shoulder saying "wotcher" - and I broke my finger.

STEVE: *Rorschach has a split lip for days in prison*

ALAN: What we were saying was, in this first issue, other than the flashback of the Comedian going out of the window, the only piece of violence that occurs is when Rorschach moves someone's little finger from there . to there. That is much more violent, frightening and disturbing than twenty people going through walls.

DAVE: I think it's a question of contrast If you look at **Kirby** what you've got is a violent, active panorama with quiet accents What we've got with WATCHMEN is a quiet panorama with a very sudden, sharp, violent accents. I think the thing to avoid in any endeavor is "middleness "

STEVE: *That's why, despite Jolly Jack's fights being a bit hoken and hyperbolic, his stuff is pure comics because he really understands the dynamics of the medium and he can handle quiet moments and stillness with tremendous sensitivity*

ALAN: With Jack it's a matter of creating, rather than learning the rules

MARTIN: *I was on Radio Bristol recently in a discussion where comics came up — and most people think that's what they're about. In superhero stories people are smashed all over the place and nobody ever gets hurt That gives a very bad impression to people Violence looks fun because Spider Man's beating someone up*

FIONA: *It's the Tom and Jerry thing, isn't it?*

PETER: *I think DESTROY said it all New York gets leveled — and what a good job nobody got hurt!*

ALAN: The violence in WATCHMEN happens in very short bursts If you've ever been in a fight you'll know how difficult it is to sustain a fight for more than

SUPERMAN ANNUAL #11 (1985).

"Once you step outside a comic-books' frame of reference you

thirty seconds .literally. I bet that most of the fights that I've been in have consisted of thirty seconds of people going "GRRR" *(mimes fight)*, and then being pulled off

FIONA: *Yes, one of the most shocking moments for me was Dan suddenly going mad when he hears about Hollis' death.*

DAVE: Of course, another thing you'll know if you've been in a fight is: you don't wisecrack whilst you're doing it

ALAN: Yeah, but Dan — in that situation — he acts like a real pratt, he starts threatening to blow up the whole neighborhood and the only reason Rorschach stops him is "Not in front of civilians."

STEVE: *But as you say in the appendix to #1: Make sure you get the sympathy of your readership — everybody likes Hollis, he's a nice old bloke. Hence Dan's reaction. Speaking of Hollis, I remember thinking that the inscription on his statue looked a bit odd. . .because you could also read it as "INGRATITUDE," one word — so to see Derf shove the statue in his face was a horrifying and sad end for him.*

MARTIN: *I thought the saddest moment in the whole series was when Hollis says: "I'm going back to car mechanics" and Osterman says electric cars are coming*

ALAN: Just the look on his face

FIONA: *Yeah, "I'll be seeing you. . ."*

DAVE: I trust you noticed that the car outside his garage, when he gets murdered, is an internal combustion engine. In fact we were going to make more of it than that, weren't we? We were going to have someone with a car

ALAN: We were going to have someone spraying a car, doing a paint job but .that was out of character for him

DAVE: Have you heard that there's a WATCHMEN film? But my view is that WATCHMEN is an ensemble piece where there isn't any one leading character. .

STEVE: *On the way up here I was saying that I don't see WATCHMEN as a film as much as a state play in acts*

DAVE: We saw it as a 13-part TV series

STEVE: *But the crossroads is a perfect stage*

ALAN: The problem with taking WATCHMEN to another medium is that we deliberately set out to establish — hard — some territory for comics. We tried to exploit the things in comics that cannot be done in any other medium. I mean, if they do a film of WATCHMEN you couldn't have the pirate stuff in it. You couldn't have the background details because they'd flash by so quickly there'd be no chance to recognize or compare them.

STEVE: *What about an animation of the pirate comic?*

ALAN: Well, they'd actually have to show still panels.

DAVE: That would get thrown out, though, I mean, who wants allegory?

MARTIN: *This goes back again to your article on comics scripting where you list all the unique properties of comics rather than letting them be compared unfavorably with cinema.*

ALAN: WATCHMEN is, to some degree, the perfect example of the theories I was formulating there, in fact.

I spoke to **Sam Ham** — he comes from Virginia, he's one of the Virginia **Hams** — and he's written the BATMAN screenplay which I'm sure you might criticize here and there but I would say that from a comic fan's point of view you couldn't ask for a better one. We've both read it and we're both satisfied. Anyway, Sam came up to see me because he's been asked to do the WATCHMEN screenplay. He said he wanted to do it. His reasoning was that he *didn't* want to do WATCHMEN because it wouldn't matter much whether he wrote it or not, since it'll be rewritten at various points, the director will change bits, the cast will change bits so that any lines that eventually appear on screen that are in any way similar to my script will be pure coincidence. In other words: if someone's gonna fuck up WATCHMEN, he'd rather it wasn't him. Still, his reason for *doing* WATCHMEN was that if someone's gonna fuck it up he'd rather it was someone who cared about it. He said, "I realize I'm defeated before I started so I've got to take a Samurai attitude to it: that I'm already

Five of Charlton's best heros. . . the original WATCHMEN? Not quite! (All characters are now owned by DC Comics.)

realize that no matter how much action - people will not notice."

dead, so I'll discharge myself with honor." I couldn't ask for a better attitude.

STEVE: *He sounds like a good salesman, apart from anything else, but the other thing about WATCHMEN is that it's episodic. As you said, on the telly it would work better*

ALAN: In a perfect world I'd rather see it as a comic. This insistence that if something is a success in one medium then it can automatically be translated to another and still be a success...

STEVE: *What's so objectionable is the way this approach looks down on the comic medium. They think that a film version would reach a wider audience But as you pointed out in the article Alan, the thing that is different about comics is that there is no movement and there's no sound. The whole point is that it really is an act of will to continue believing that one panel follows another.*

ALAN: If I may.. if I might just drop a tidbit in. they asked someone if he'd be prepared to play Dr. Manhattan — **Arnold Schwarzenegger.**

(HOWLS OF DISAPPROVAL,

ALAN: Apparently they said to him: Arnold, would you be prepared to shave your head and paint yourself blue for a film? And he said sure, if it makes sense. Actually, I'd never seen any **Schwarzenegger** films before I watch TERMINATOR last night .. and I watched very carefully and realized he could *do* it! But will anybody believe that **Arnold Schwarzenegger** can actually understand the theory of relativity? He's got a degree, he's got a German accent which I hadn't imagined Osterman having but. .his father's German

DAVE: I think it's a case where a certain amount of woodenness would actually enhance the performance

ALAN: My suggestion was for Dr Manhattan to be played by a computer graphic — which I think would work.

DAVE: I think, however, that **Joel Silver**, the producer of the film, wants to see **Arnold Schwarzenegger** in everything You know - **Arnold Schwarzenegger** is Sgt Rock

MARTIN: *Any sign of a director?*

ALAN: I don't know — they asked me for suggestions but...

PETER: *It was rumored to be Walter Hill and I thought STREETS OF FIRE, yeah!*

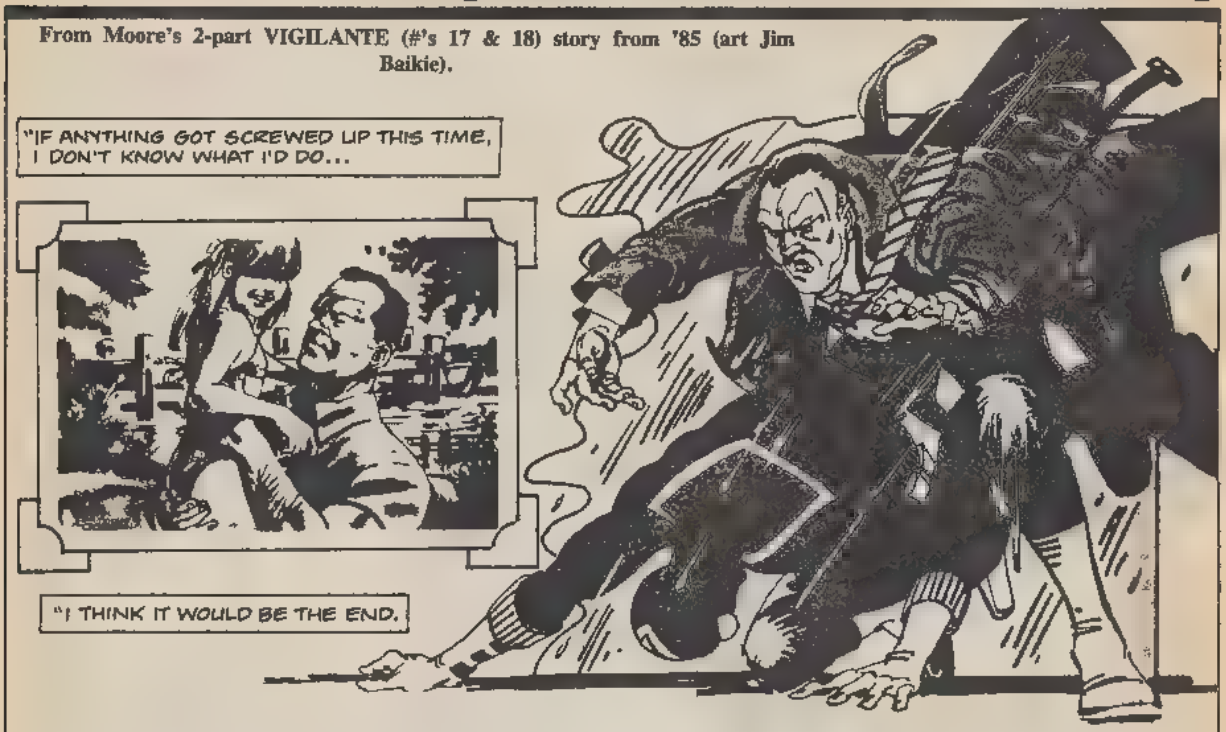
ALAN: Can I just say that the reason that everybody is saying **Walter Hill** is the director is lazy journalism. I originally said, in an interview, that I wasn't too clear about it but I gathered it was being directed by someone to do with 48 HOURS and the person who wrote that article assumed I meant **Walter Hill** I issued a correction saying no, it's **Joel Silver** and **Larry Gordon** but everybody has taken that interview as their reference There was a thing in Photoplay the other day saying there's a new film being bought out by **Walter Hill** called WATCHMEN, but the name that everyone's really looking for is **Alan Moore.** Poor old bastard **Walter Hill** — he's being unfavorably compared to me when he's got nothing to do with the picture

STEVE: *Are you gonna get any input as storyboarder Dave?*

DAVE: I don't know — it's even problematic how much input Alan's gonna get. However, from what **Joel Silver** said, if it is made, it'll be made at Elstree which is just down the road — so I shall certainly be making a nuisance of myself on the set.

"I don't believe that optimism is possible without looking

From Moore's 2-part VIGILANTE (#'s 17 & 18) story from '85 (art Jim Baikie).



STEVE: *Have you done any storyboarding before?*

DAVE: No, but it's a thing I'd like to do and what people I know who've done storyboarding have said to me is how comprehensively drawn comics are compared to what they do in films. So it would do me good to do a load of pictures that have a lot of emotion in them without having to do a lot of the finishing that's necessary in a comic. So I'd like to do that, but I don't think I want to sit and draw storyboards of something I've already done for a year and anyway — if they stay faithful to the book the drawing is so comprehensively worked out that they shouldn't need storyboards.

STEVE: *Has anyone ever compared your art to Botticelli? That's what some of the drawing reminded me of — particularly Dr Manhattan when you look closely at the hatching, the actual inking technique, then it works in a different way to the old classical law of only drawing an actual line where two planes overlap*

DAVE: Well there are some influences in there. .**Moebius** .. and **Heath Robinson.** One of the best things that ever happened to me at school was when they gave a Latin reader that was illustrated by **Heath Robinson** — and that really opened my eyes. The kind of line that **Moebius** uses, which is different from that of **Jean Giraud** (the two are one and the same man) is a line which detaches the artist from the art Because you draw in a simple, almost dead weight outline you deemphasize the artist's involvement with it — you lose the character of the artist and emphasize the character of what's being drawn.

As far as technique's concerned, the way I drew WATCHMEN was I used quite a stiff pen so that there wouldn't be a lot of modulation in the line or much evidence of me being there. But that was the kind of thing I was doing on ROGUE TROOPER anyway As we all know, American superheroes are supposed to be drawn with nice springy brushes Dr. Manhattan is faintly translucent though — so no shadows fall on his body, it just appears darker where certain plans are at an angle to the viewer.

STEVE: *Perfect for the "drawn for color" style of artwork, I would've thought.*

DAVE: It's also a question of drawing for the printing process which means, luckily, with Baxter books, that black really does print black

ALAN: Towards the end, when you knew what John was capable of, you started leaving large amounts for him to do. Like the cover of #9 All Dave drew on that was a bottle — the background was all John's

STEVE: *Talking about great coloring, I think that sequence with the light going on and off as the Comedian spills his guts to Moloch in #2. Accentuated by the nine panel grid which turns the spread into a checkerboard of nights and days. The only stuff I've seen which comes near it is the color in the monthly SPIRIT comic Kitchen Sink did*

PETER: *Right.*

DAVE: I think in the space of those twelve issues you saw John progress from, say, the first couple of issues because it wasn't until probably #3 that he saw how issue #1 looked. He began feeling his way, then became comfortable with it and then with issue #12 he got really . . .

STEVE: *It's audacious*

DAVE: Yes, and if John had been timid, that would've blown it It was nice to know that after we'd done our bit that we could look forward to his color work.

ALAN: Another layer of artistry.

MARTIN: *And there are so very few comics that do use it as artistry.*

STEVE: *There are exceptions: Richmond Lewis' colors on BATMAN and THE SHADOW. .THE SHADOW is almost held* together *by her coloring*

DAVE: When you open a comic, you look at the coloring, then you look at the drawing then you read the words

STEVE: *It seems strange that publishers haven't made this connection for themselves yet. Without a good colorist on WATCHMEN it could have fallen flat on its face.*

ALAN: I'd say, it could have been an after thought Now, are there any direct questions you have, given that we've got about ten minutes before we have to go.

FIONA: *Yes With WATCHMAN and DARK KNIGHT coming out as two big graphic novels this year I find that in*

very long and very hard at the worst possible case."

DARK KNIGHT Frank Miller seems to come to the conclusion that come Armageddon first everyone fights with each other but then they work together and they save themselves . . . whereas in WATCHMEN when the chips are down it begins with everyone trying to help and then they all get involved in a fight before realizing there's nothing they can do and become this unit of caring humanity just before they're blown up Was that at all deliberate?

ALAN: Well, it wasn't deliberately playing off at Frank. I just think that perhaps he's more optimistic about human nature than I am

STEVE: *I think the fact that the people at the intersection got killed was really irrelevant to what they were doing there. I mean, they were killed in their finest hour, where a lot of the characters were trying to stop the fighting*

FIONA: *But they all ended up being involved in the fight*

ALAN: It was a human mess.

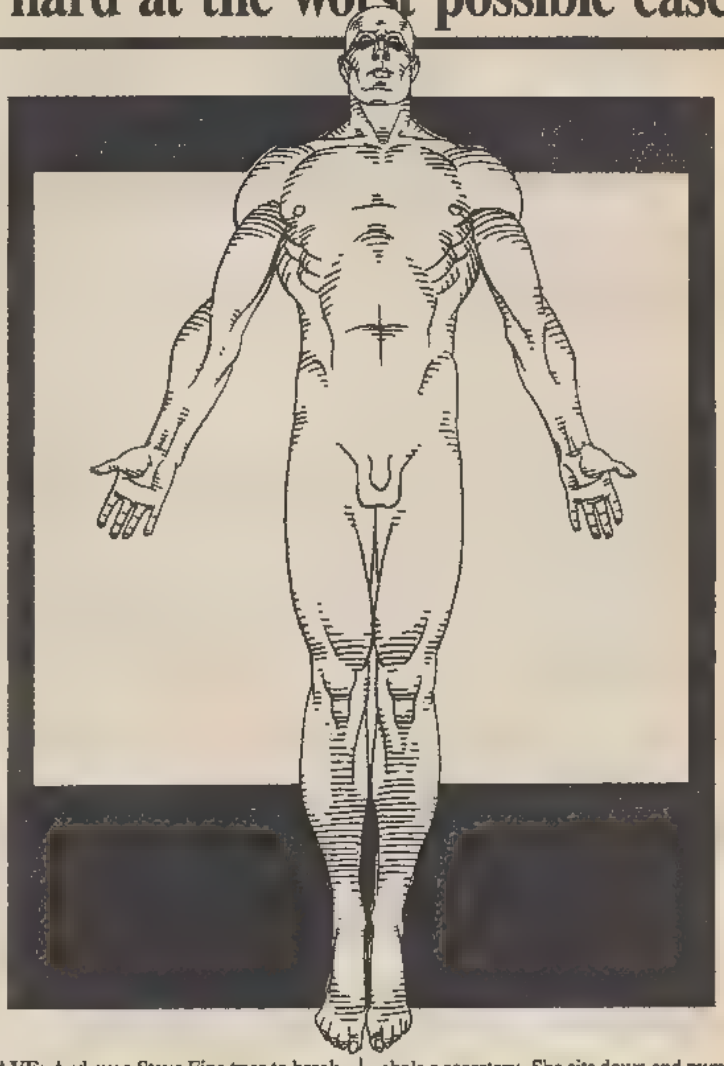
DAVE: Yes, but I don't consider WATCHMEN to be a pessimistic book — on the contrary, it's very positive about the human condition

ALAN: I believe that with WATCHMEN, if we've achieved anything in terms of the moral aspect of it, I don't believe that optimism is possible without looking very long and very hard at the worst possible case I felt that after issue #6 that's the bottom line, you can't say much worse than that. So, if we have any optimism in the series it'll be valid optimism because it won't simply be based on ignoring the nasty facts of life. To me, just in that last panel, in Godfrey's last line "I leave it entirely in your hands" — that's talking to the reader as well . . . I leave it entirely in your hands, how *do* we sort out this Gordian Knot? If the question is who makes the world? Then if there's an answer it is that everybody does

Yeah, there's people that seem to be in more immediate power than others but really the world is an elaborate series of accidents, coincidences and unbelievable synchronicities that people appear to be in control but . well, think about the events in your own life, the things that have made really dramatic changes in yours can be traced back to deciding to pick up a ball-point pen or not pick it up.

DAVE: And who looked one of the most frightened and powerless people in WATCHMEN? It was **President Nixon** in the bunker. I think on a human level, the people at the intersection . there's a fair degree of altruism and heroism

ALAN: **Malcolm Long's** a hero.



DAVE: And even Steve Fine tries to break up the fight.

STEVE: *I remember you saying at one of the WATCHMEN panels that there were a lot of red herrings in the WATCHMEN continuity Even so I became quite involved with the two Bernards and Steve Fine's little soliloques here and there . . .*

PETER: *That's great because it brings you back to the human dimension of the Hiroshima question, namely. these are the people you would be sacrificing.*

ALAN: One influence on the writing of the end of #11 came from my seeing **Stomu Yamash'ta** and the Red Buddha Theatre doing something called A DAY IN THE LIFE OF HIROSHIMA

STEVE: *That must've been a while ago, blimey.*

ALAN: Well, he was good, old **Stomu** . . . or **Stom**, as I call him But he did this act and it begins with an empty stage . .then a little boy comes out and sits down and starts to fish and then . . stops. Then someone else comes out — she's got a little mask on to show she's a secretary She sits down and mimes typing and then she stops. Then there's all these others coming out — there are two lesbians, there's somebody on their way to work, there's a fish-seller, there are two honeymooners coming out onto a balcony . .stretching and then turning to each other and kissing and the girl's leg goes up at the back and they freeze Then all of a sudden this white light begins to build behind the stage. They've got fans back there so the curtains start to blow. And they've just got a bank of klieg lights or something and everyone in the audience can't see a thing — there's just white light. The music builds up. .and there's just these frozen silhouettes of people against the light. An' I thought .Wow!

STEVE: *Like at the start of INSIGNIFICANCE where you witness a neutron bomb's effect on Marilyn Monroe and then the film is shot backwards and you get your typical movie happy ending with her saying "bye "'*

ALAN: Yeah and just that freeze on the hand

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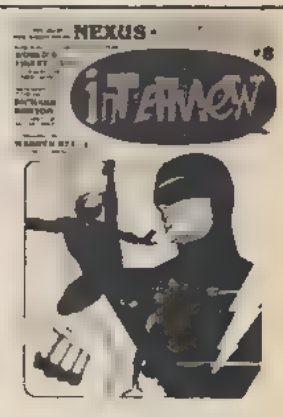

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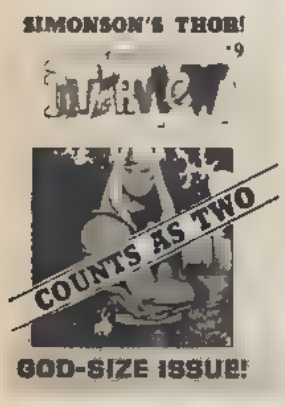

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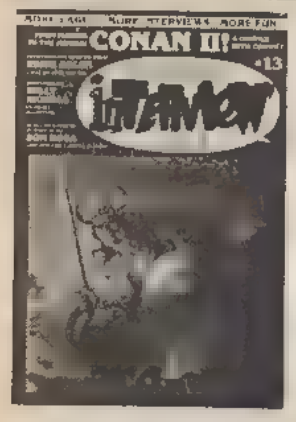

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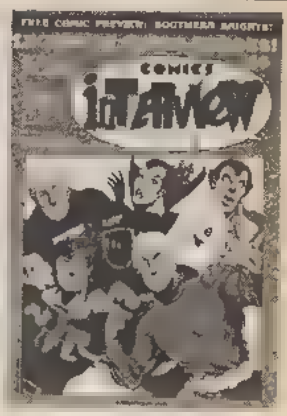

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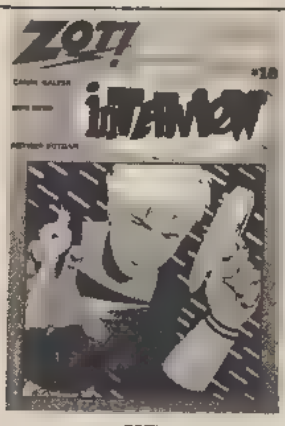

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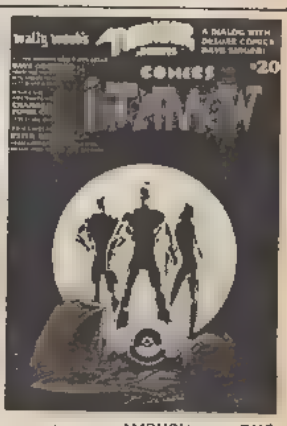

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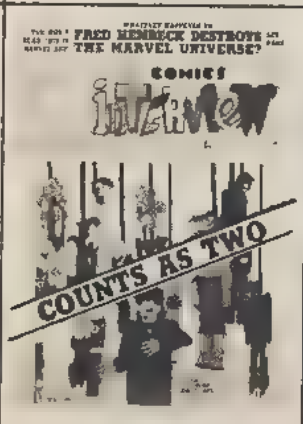

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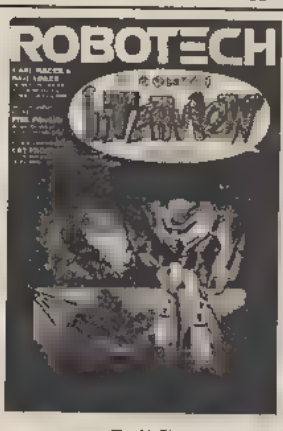

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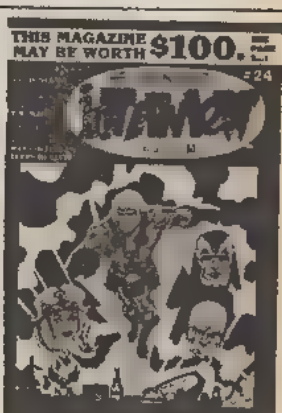

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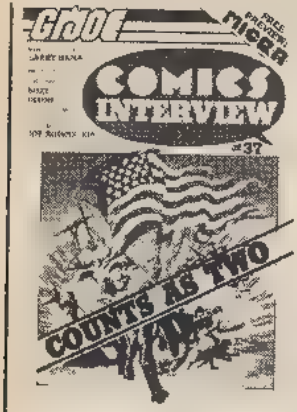

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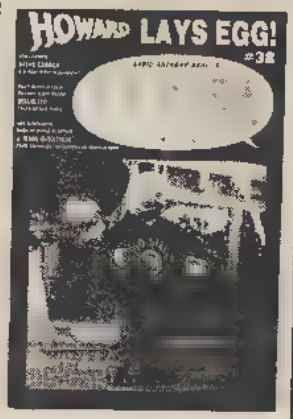

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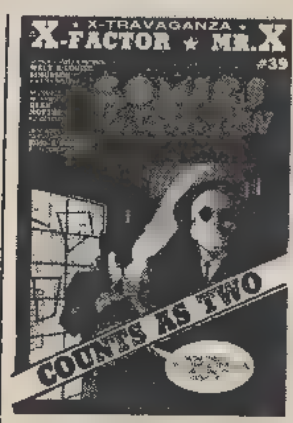

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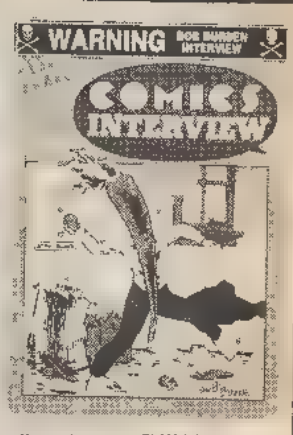

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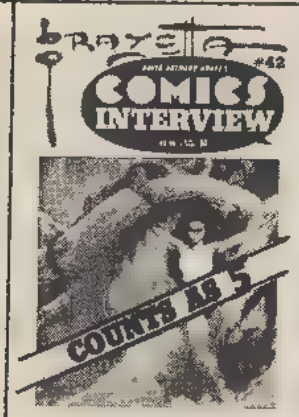

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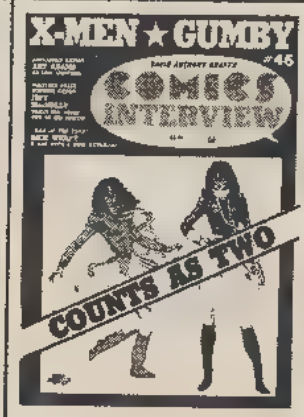

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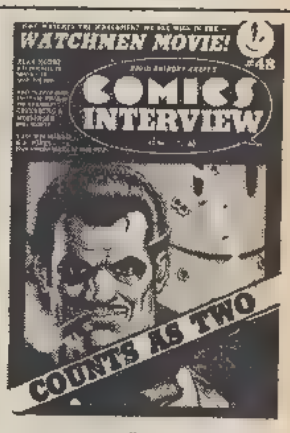

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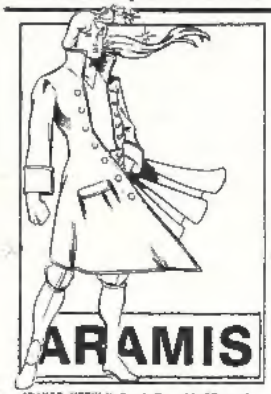

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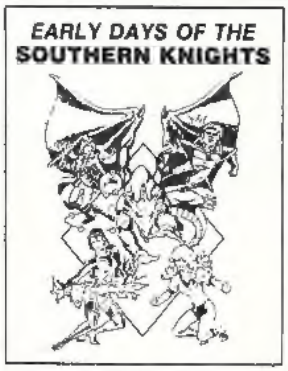

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